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INTRODUCTION

It cannot be supposed that Nonconformist Churchmen have taken up a position of detachment from State Church systems merely to gratify a taste for singularity or a love of eccentricity. For one thing a man is not made *singular* by being a Nonconformist, and Nonconformity is neither religious nor social eccentricity. The centre of the British Empire is certainly not State Churches, for there is no State Church in that empire outside England, Wales, and Scotland. Even Scotland might be excepted, seeing that the Presbyterianism established there would be Nonconformity south of the Tweed. But putting that on one side, it is a striking fact that State Churchism does not follow the flag. The further the Union Jack flies the

further the policy of Church Establishment is left behind. There is no State Church in Ireland, the Dominion of Canada, Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland, New Zealand, Tasmania, India, British Burmah, Ceylon, Cape Colony, Natal, British Bechuanaland, Hong Kong, British Borneo, or British New Guinea. Almost the whole geographical extent of the King's dominions, and some seven-eighths of the population of his empire, are under the far-spreading banner of religious equality. The *eccentricity of conformity* would be a more correct phrase than the *eccentricity of Nonconformity.*

Even at home in England, where Anglican Episcopacy forms the State Church and the State religion, it is by no means singular to be a Free Churchman. A vast majority of the population own no allegiance to the Establishment. If, moreover, we take account of church sittings provided, the number of communicants, the number of Sunday scholars, and the amount of money raised for Sunday School buildings and work,

it is certain that the non-established Churches take the lead. Of Wales it is needless to speak. "Singularity" in that land of mountain and song certainly does not appertain to Nonconformists.

Apart from numerical considerations, however, it will be contended in these pages that Nonconformists stand for solemn, lofty, and inspiring principles, of which they have no need to be ashamed, but every reason to be proud. They have chosen their position as the right attitude towards the ecclesiastical and spiritual problems which meet in Churchmanship. The nicknames applied to them to emphasise their dissent from systems and tenets which they deem erroneous, they wear with equanimity, knowing that it is their assent, not their *dissent*, which makes them Free Churchmen. They disbelieve certain ecclesiastical fictions because they believe with strenuous conviction the truths for which those fictions are offered as substitutes. They reject because they accept. The passionate ardour with which they embrace the New Testament faith and the spiritual

and ecclesiastical equality of believers in Christ are vital to their Nonconformity, and make it no negation, but a positive position. They deny because they affirm, and even in order to affirm, the precious truths endangered by the errors which they deny.

There is no pleasure in difference for its own sake. To be sharply divided in opinion and practice from neighbours who are estimable on every personal ground, is one of the sorrows, not one of the satisfactions of life, for every man of right feeling. And these matters of feeling are part of men's real interests. But besides losses in the region of feeling, it is certain that for many in exposed situations avowed Nonconformity carries with it losses of a very practical and substantial kind. Almost every secular inducement is offered to Nonconformists to desert the unfashionable ways of rural Free Churchmanship. Sometimes these inducements prevail, but far more often they are met with quiet, good-humoured, and yet determined resistance. All I contend for is that credit should be given to Nonconformists for a positive

faith ; that they should not be aspersed as the devotees of a fad ; and that their attitude is not due to discordant and cantankerous temper. *They believed, therefore have they spoken.*

CHAPTER I

LOYALTY TO THE FATHERS

NONCONFORMISTS stand for the memory of the great dead who made religious liberty possible. We are not ashamed of our forefathers, though we sometimes fear they will be ashamed of us. We live in days of a good deal of sugar-coated blandishment, when the art of saying smooth things is often mistaken for charity, and is practised as a substitute for duty. Thank God, there is a wide and widening range of subjects on which men of various Churches are in intellectual and moral sympathy with each other. The differences between State Churchmen and Free Churchmen do not change the colour of the rose. They do not unfix the

Pole Star. They do not rob a lifeboat rescue of its glory. They do not weaken the appeal which misfortune, suffering, and death make to the human heart of all of us. But, on the other hand, the beautiful and imperishable things in which we are one, should fill men's hearts with a tender desire for complete unity on a basis of justice. All our forefathers asked for was justice, and their demands are still, in large part, left unsatisfied. There is nothing foreign to charity in the convictions that make us Nonconformists. There is no ungodly bitterness in the contention that our taxes, our liberties, our children, and our Churches should be treated by the State—of which we are components—with fairness and respect. When we are asked to cultivate "sweet reasonableness" in the form of suppressing our righteous claims, our answer is that for freemen to acquiesce in injustice is neither sweet nor reasonable. We suspect the charity which calls upon others to "suffer long and be kind," in order that suffering may continue to be inflicted with impunity.

We hold that our Fathers were God-inspired when they strove to make England fit to live in, and when they claimed the right to think and live in their native land. We are not disposed to worship the Fathers as perfect, or as if all of them understood the full application of the principles of religious liberty. Nothing is more puerile in argument than an attempt to disparage a cause or a nation because of limitations in some of its leaders. Nonconformists are not members of an Historical Admiration Society. But on the other hand they are capable of gratitude. They are not callous and thankless inheritors of a past built up for them by men who hazarded their lives to the death. There are those who count it their duty to celebrate the virtues and death of Charles Stuart, in spite of the duplicity and treachery which brought England into bloody strife. Those who can honour such a memory should be allowed to do so undisturbed. But Nonconformists have their own duty to discharge, their own heroes to revere. We recall the martyrdom of Barrowe, Greenwood, Penry,

Wightman, and Fownes. We think with emotion of the nameless victims of Royal and Episcopal cruelty who perished in English dungeons because they declared, at all risks, that Christ was the only King in the Church which He bought with His blood. We can never forget the man who has given us perhaps the most thrilling and sublime definition of a Church to be found in any literature. And we the more heartily welcome the words of the definition because its author embodied it in the most fruitful organisation and mission which the Christian Church has seen since the early centuries. John Robinson's conception of the Church is one that we can never allow to die:—

"A company, consisting though but of two or three, separated from the world, whether unchristian, or anti-Christian, and gathered into the name of Christ by a covenant made to walk in all the ways of God known unto them, is a Church, and so hath the whole power of Christ" (Robinson, "Works," ii., 132).

There is real pathos in the antithesis con-

tained in the words of the pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers—"whether *un*christian or *anti*-Christian." The heaviest blows suffered by our Fathers were not dealt by pagan or infidel hands, but by statesmen and prelates steeped in the odours of ecclesiastical sanctity. It was the unchristian savagery of Church statecraft that made the green fields and farms of Scrooby and Austerfield uninhabitable by the Brewsters, Bradfords, Carvers, and the rest of the exiled line. Nonconformists of the twentieth century think it no sacrilege to add the heroines and heroes of the Atlantic passage to the roll of worthies preserved in the Book of Hebrews, and to say, *These all crossed in faith—and died in faith!* It was fitting that one of the greatest of the Fathers of English liberty and Free Churchmanship, John Milton, should have paid them the glowing tribute:—

"Faithful and freeborn Englishmen, and good Christians, constrained to forsake their dearest home, their friends and kindred, whom nothing but the wide ocean and savage deserts of America could hide and shelter from

the fury of the bishops" ("Reformation in England," Book II.).

Should Nonconformists ever be willing to forget the John Robinsons and the Roger Williamses of their history, they will deserve to forfeit the liberties for which the fathers contended—not in syllogisms only, but with a magnificent daring that forsook country, faced death, and called new States into being. Some are too ready to dismiss the story of Nonconformist origins and sufferings as a tedious introduction to the more sensational volume of present-day on-goings. A flippant tone of speech is sometimes caught, almost implying that there are no sacred memories to cherish, or that men are without heart to cherish them. We may be certain, however, that an irreverent ignoring of the past is a bad preparation for future duty and achievement. We must look backward with tenderness if we would look forward with hope.

The Free Churches will lose much by living too engrossingly in the present and too feverishly for the future. We properly reject the worship and invocation of saints. We read

with indignation in the pages of Motley how Philip of Spain was worshipping the disinterred bones of a saint in one part of the battlefield while the streets of St. Quentin were running with the blood of men, and women and children were being driven homeless and broken-hearted outside the walls. Saint-worship, whether grotesque or devout, we repudiate with good reason; but loving remembrance of the Fathers is a duty. It would do Nonconformists no harm to give more stated and solemn commemoration to their great dead. There is no need to wait for centenaries or ter-centenaries before we arrange national services in memory of our great leaders. We might do worse than to recall, at least once in every few years, in special assemblies of the people, the lives and services of the Wiclifs, Barrowes, Penries, Robinsons, Brewsters, Roger Williams', Cromwells, Miltons, Bunyans, Wesleys, Howards, Knibbs, Halls, Chalmers', Moffats, Livingstones of Protestant and Nonconformist history.

CHAPTER II

THE CHURCH'S IMMEDIATE DEPENDENCE ON CHRIST

NONCONFORMISTS may be said to have become Nonconformists by their rejection of the king's authority over the Church. In this they were only reverting to the order and system of the Founder of Christianity. Differences of opinion may be maintained as to some aspects of primitive Christianity, but it will not be seriously contended that Christ ever committed His Church to the guardianship and rule of secular Governments. The Saviour has not left us any full disclosure of His judgment on the political authorities of His day, but what He has left is the reverse of commendatory. Every indication of His

mind in the Gospels points to the conclusion that He intended the society of His disciples to be in relations of complete dependence on Himself, and to be under no other government or direction than that of His truth and spirit as revealed to His people.

John Henry Newman's phrase about the Church consisting of "rulers and subjects" is wide of the mark. The believer's subjection is to Christ, and to no officer of the Church whatsoever.

Nonconformists have never undervalued or rejected a presiding, teaching, and pastoral ministry. No Churches have held that ministry in higher honour. But to them the ministry is not a substitute for Christ's authority; it is a means by which souls may be brought to welcome, obey, and adore that authority. Dependent on Christ for mercy and hope, for life and joy, they desire to have brought to their minds the largest, wisest, and most persuasive view of that grace of God which has appeared for men in Christ Jesus. Nonconformists lean upon Christ none the less because they ask qualified teachers to

discourse to them of the strength, the atonement, the righteousness, the wisdom, the love, and the immortality which are in Christ for all believers. Testimony and direction as to the mind and work of Christ they welcome from any quarter, but only that they may be brought to behold the glory and feel the mastery of that mind for themselves. They are like the disconsolate woman in the Garden ; they ask for help in finding Christ only that, when He is found, they may "take Him away" in their hearts. In visiting the Alps, it aids the traveller very much to be told where the mountains stand, and where the paths lie, and to have some account of the sweep and majesty of the views which open from the summit. But no one would accept guide-book, guide, model, or diorama as equivalents of the glory to be gained by the ascent. There is nothing to take the place of the ice-peaks which for ages have pierced the over-arching blue.

Ministrations of teaching and oversight only emphasise, from the Nonconformist point of view, the soul's absolute dependence

on Christ. The fact that a large and often learned exposition of the "riches of Christ" is at the service of the Churches enhances their sense of the illimitable resources laid up in Him for the life of the world.

It is on Him that the Church depends for the gift of that other "Comforter," who is to abide with us for ever—that Spirit of Truth who gives insight of eternal relations, keen discriminations of conscience, the feeling of the Divine Presence in all surroundings, overpowering convictions of duty, and the peace that flows from a perpetual Divine companionship. To what shrine or confessional can we go? "*Thou hast the words of eternal life!*"

It is on Christ that the Church depends even for full knowledge of Christ. We have to go to Him for the only satisfying interpretation of Himself. He gives us a spirit of understanding and quickened memory of all that He has said. He awakens the soul to full knowledge and consciousness of Himself. He alone, by that Spirit, can save men from the blank dulness and death-sleep which

threatens to descend upon them like night. It is in fellowship with Christ that our sense of spiritual life, duty, and destiny is sharpened into certitude and rapture.

Nonconformists stand for this direct approach to and appropriation of Christ. The pardon of sin, the gift of a cleansed and healed mind, the power to execute the revealed mandate of God's will, the power to bear loss and pain, the sharing of the Cross and Resurrection together—these are blessings that can only flow from personal union with the Saviour. They form, in the aggregate of experience, the state described in our Lord's own words: "Abide in Me, and I in you."

Nonconformists can never believe that these offices of the risen Saviour have been delegated to any Church or clergy. Whatever be the precise meaning of one or two obscure sentences of Scripture much relied on by the sacerdotal party, Nonconformists are sure that that is not their meaning. They can admit no interpretation which repeals our Lord's assurances that He and His own are

to remain in direct communion to the end of the world, and that His nearness to men, His gifts to men, His power to save, illuminate, and bless men, are to have their fullest manifestation in the economy of the Spirit after He has withdrawn His visible presence from us. Seeing that He was directly approached while yet on earth, and that He promised to be in fuller and mightier contact with His Church after His death and ascension, Nonconformists cling to the belief that the Church is on terms of direct intimacy with its Divine Head. And so they repudiate the elaborate schemes of priestly mediation contrived by sacerdotalists for the subjection of the general body of Christians to self-constituted rulers of the Church.

CHAPTER III

THE VALIDITY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

In dealing with this part of the subject I am aware that all Free Churches do not treat the local congregation in the same way or invest it with the same powers. The Congregational, Presbyterian, and Methodist orders of Church polity are not to be confounded in this respect. The Congregationalists have for their characteristic principle that the local Church should be self-governing. It appoints the pastor, fixes the order of service, erects and owns property, and decides for itself the question of association with other Churches of the same order and the terms of such association. Independency stands for the validity of the local Church in the broadest

sense, and will not admit that clerical orders, Church courts, or an incorporated system are necessary to bring the Church into existence. In this view the Baptists, Independents, and some of the later Methodist connexions are practically agreed. Even those Free Churches which are an incorporated system, and do not permit the constituent congregation or society to appoint the minister or hold Church property, would zealously contend for the validity of the local Church on its spiritual side. Surely there are few Wesleyans or Presbyterians who would insist that it requires a whole denomination to make a *Church*. For reasons of expediency, connected with Church order, security of property, and better sustentation and extension of Church work, many cling to an organised system who would be the last to deny that the local worshipping congregation lacked the attributes of a Church. A Wesleyan society, in which the religion of Jesus Christ is preached, where the ordinances of Communion and Baptism are administered, where the spiritual life of old and young is disciplined, where every

member is at liberty to lead in prayers and intercessions, is surely possessed of the character of a New Testament Church. He who sent gracious messages to the "Churches" of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, and recognised the marks of Church life in each of those Christian societies, knows where to find His Church to-day. The household family is not less a family because it is not the whole human family; and the local Church loses nothing of its validity because it is only an item in the geographical vastness of Christendom. The parish cannot be a kingdom, but the village Christian society can be a Church. The statement that Christ is "Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all," in no way cancels the Church character of the local society. Christ distinctly promised His presence and headship to the few gathered together in His Name, as well as to "the holy Church throughout all the world."

Of course the collective Church in a nation, or in many nations together, is a conception

as correct as it is sublime. To the "great Shepherd of the sheep," all the flocks in ten thousand pastures are one flock, and will one day be brought together on the everlasting hills and in the universal fold. But Christ's relation to the whole Church is not more real than His relation to the local Church. A vast, world-wide organisation is not an absolutely necessary note of the Church. The Church existed long before it was widely spread. Every essential function of faith, fellowship, government, prayer, teaching, discipline, support, and extension, can be discharged, and had necessarily to be discharged, from local centres, before colossal nation-Churches could be fabricated. Robinson's contention that even a few persons gathered in covenant with Christ are a Church, and have "the whole power of Christ," rests on unshakable foundations of Scripture teaching and historic precedent. No one, perhaps, will question the right of the local Churches to federate themselves into a Union, or even to organise themselves into a national or international Church. But Nonconformists do not

admit that the national or imperial basis is a condition precedent of the validity or actuality of the Church. Where Christ is, with His believing, associated, and obedient people, there are the marks of the presence and identity of the Church.

We are much in love with grandiose territorial designations. We are, perhaps, too much afraid of being considered "local" and "insular." It must be admitted, and gladly admitted, that the conception of the universal Church is inspiring to the Christian heart, and that it tends to free us from a cramping and unworthy parochialism. The good woman who said she would not sew for foreign missions, but she would have worked if it had been for "Jackson Street," is an example of a narrow spirit which sometimes affects others beside members of sewing circles. To be in love with the whole people of God, and to be in sympathy with Christ's work in all the nations, is a grace that needs cultivation at a time when national patriotism is somewhat exaggerated, and when the solidarity of Christ's people throughout the world may

be less firmly grasped. At the same time, Nonconformists will continue to resist every attempt to disparage and ignore the spiritual authority of the local Church. The idea that political and Church organisations must be coterminous is no more acceptable to Nonconformists than the complementary view that the Church is an integral part of the nation's machinery of government. It is not the nation that creates the local, spiritual Church, nor is the authority of the Church dependent on national sanction or mandate. A Church is not more really a Church because its framework is drawn on county, national, or imperial lines. Its character is rooted in relations with which statutory law cannot intermeddle. Long before the political nation is prepared to be Christian in temper and policy, the Church of Jesus Christ, even in obscure local meeting places, has pledged itself to the fulfilment of the Will of God and the service of man.

CHAPTER IV

THE SPIRITUAL UNITY OF THE CHURCH

NONCONFORMISTS are just as ready to affirm the unity of all Churches that follow Christ as they are forward to vindicate the Churchmanship of the members of the smallest local Church. The principle which inspires the vindication of the one dictates the affirmation of the other. Nonconformists stand for a Church system that harmonises with the principles of liberty of conscience and of free access to God in Christ. The same "power of Christ" which makes the individual a Christian, makes the local assembly of faithful Christians a Church, even though the local organisation may

not comprise every instrumentality of Church government in a complete form.

But Nonconformists declare that all persons and bodies that are joined to Christ belong to the great Church redeemed and governed by Christ. Their conception of Church unity is grander and more imposing than that of those who demand that Christian life, thought, and worship shall everywhere run in one denominational mould and obey the same official direction.

In standing for their own Churchmanship, as conditioned in the faith and fellowship of Christ, they are bound to defend the claims of others to be in the Church of Christ on the same terms. What was enough for the great Apostle is enough for us: "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal—the Lord knoweth them that are His, and, Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Separate organisations, if there be charity, are not obstructive, still less are they destructive of the unity of the whole Church. National unity is not invalidated by separate

homes, counties, provincialisms, and local governments. The unity of the nation is made the more indissoluble because there enter into it—not mere items of population—but the complex and strenuous factors of family, district, county, and province. The nation that grows into one by the same growth that has made it a multitude of local unities, presents an impregnable front to the enemy's onset and possesses the best guarantees of stability.

Nonconformists do not need to enter a common and colossal ecclesiastical organisation in order to realise the unity of the Church. They realise this by partaking in the supernatural life and mission conferred by Christ upon all who pass from death unto life—out of self into Him.

The best men in all Churches are often led by the Spirit of God to act as if this unity were a fact. In stating the positions maintained by the sacerdotal Churches in public controversy, it is usual for their leaders to make no concessions to Churches outside the pale. Authoritative declarations

by them are apt to be as peremptory as military proclamations. It is inevitable that Churches which claim exclusive communications with Heaven and sole custody of the Divine mysteries, should assert these pretensions in literature and pulpit. But ecclesiastics are also men. The living forces that temper dogma and mould life act upon them not less than upon others. Lest men should be brought into captivity to their own narrow definitions, it has pleased God to add a human heart to their other means of education. And thus it often happens that the controversialist effaces himself in the presence of spiritual realities and of human grief.

Let me mention an illustration for which I am indebted to one who himself had no ecclesiastical narrowness to overcome. Those who knew the splendid public gifts and exquisite personality of John Turland Brown, of Northampton, will know what I mean. A young priest, under John Henry Newman, at Birmingham, was the son of Nonconformist parents. Indeed, his father had

been a Nonconformist minister. One day he was summoned to the death-bed of his mother, and her death, which soon followed, was at once intimated to his distinguished teacher, Father Newman. Mr. Brown was told the contents of the letter that came from Newman expressing his sympathy with the priest in his irreparable loss. One part of it ran as follows—

"I need not tell you how much I feel for you at this time, when your dear mother has been taken from you. Nor need I assure you that I shall pray for you. I shall also remember your dear mother to-morrow at Mass. *Not that she needs it, for I have no doubt she had hold of the hem of His garment, and that to-day she is with Him in Paradise.*"

The tribute of the great Roman Catholic to the piety and salvation of a Baptist church member, is an instance of the Christian magnanimity to which I have referred, which conducts men to correct conclusions that run athwart much printed dogmatism because they proceed straight from the mind of Christ.

CHAPTER V

THE CHURCH'S INDEPENDENCE OF STATE CONTROL

NONCONFORMISTS, in common with all Christians, have reasons for distrusting State interference with the faith, government, and worship of the Church of Christ. The Roman State was not wise in its attempts to deal with the person and teaching of the Founder of Christianity. The Jewish State —so far as the Great Council at Jerusalem may be said to have been entrusted with political duties towards religion—perpetrated an even more ghastly failure.

And if the Christian religion could not be interpreted by the State when that religion addressed men in the person of its Founder,

it cannot be said that documentary and organised Christianity has fared much better at its hands. The fact is that the State does not hold itself bound by the ideals of Christianity. It has, of course, often professed to be guided by some of the ethical standards of Christianity. But hereditary despots, constitutional monarchs, and Parliaments chosen by majorities, have so often exhibited gross incapacity to understand or to observe Christian ethics, that it is hopeless to rely upon such authorities for dealing with Church doctrine, polity, or discipline. The practice of the Divine righteousness has been declared by the Saviour to be a condition precedent to the understanding of religious truth. We might therefore confidently expect that secular Governments, which have so often treated Christian morals as irrelevant to public policy, and have prosecuted their own aggrandisement by crime, would fail in qualifications for framing the rules of the Church's faith, worship, and discipline.

Seeing that in matters of common moral obligation and justice to its own members, it

is hard to get the State to make up its mind to do right, and to do it, it is presumption of the most fatuous kind to maintain that the State is competent to direct the affairs of a society whose ideals are immeasurably higher than its own.

It is not only despotic Governments that fail to be just and humane, but democratic States as well. Selfishness, when it is the spirit of a Tzar, is no worse than the selfishness of millions of free citizens. In fact, when a bad policy is carried on with the consent of millions, it works mischiefs more subtle and widespread than those which result from a despotic fiat.

The British Parliament, in the first year of a new century, might at least be expected to give genuine and ungrudging protection to young children from the associations and atmosphere of the gin-shop. But this great Parliament, which thinks it can supervise National Christianity, has shown itself incapable of a simple act of moral guardianship over little children. The Bill before the House proposed that children under

sixteen years should not be allowed to fetch intoxicating liquors from licensed premises. Most people thought that a Parliament which includes bishops and regulates worship would be sure to pass this simple but urgent measure at once. But they were mistaken. They had not allowed for the difficulty which the State feels in doing anything *because* it is right. Governments run away from a moral principle as if it were dangerous, or at least Utopian. There is nothing that looks so unstatesmanlike to the average Member of Parliament as a demand of conscience. It disturbs and even distresses him. And so the House of Commons decided, first, that if the child was *over fourteen*, it should be allowed to fetch liquor in any amount from any grog-shop in the land. Its next decision probably surpassed all former triumphs of parliamentary smallmindedness, for it was that children of any age, however tender, should be allowed to fetch liquor from the public-house provided it were supplied to them in corked and sealed bottles. It never occurred to the majority of our

legislators that the object sought was not merely to prevent children sipping the liquor, but to protect the child from the environment of bad language and influence with which this particular trade surrounds itself as by some fatal necessity.

Is it conceivable that Jesus Christ could have intended to place His Church under the control of such a halting, unwieldy, and inept instrumentality? He knew the limitations and temptations of statecraft. He had made His own inner study of the policy of the "Kings of the Gentiles," and had found that political rulers in His day, as too often in subsequent centuries, were mainly anxious to exercise lordship over men who neither desired the honour of their acquaintance nor the privilege of their superintendence. The State institution, as then constituted, too often embodied only the supreme idea of Force. It was, of course, easy to argue that this application of force to millions who did not want it would be of the greatest advantage to the subjugated people. Powers like Rome, Philip of Spain, and Buonaparte, were

always solemnly intent on the improvement of the nations they wasted and decimated. But just as invariably those peoples wished to dispense with the proffered boon, and to struggle on under previous conditions that had contented them.

These considerations, and many others that might be adduced in support, show that there is a reasonable case for the position taken by Nonconformists, that the Church should be independent of State control. Nonconformists believe that the Church is under the direct rule of Christ, and for that reason they reject State control. They also believe that man's religious life is a matter of free conscience under Christ's Spirit and sovereignty, and on that ground again they repudiate State control. They further hold that a Church which is constituted of free Christian men must itself be free to devise its own rules of worship, discipline, government, and ministration. What Christ does for the one soul He makes free, He must mean to do for the collective Church He redeems. By no word or act of

His of which we have any record, did He ever subject the spiritual life of His people, singly or in association, to State rule. He knew full well that the objects which He set before His Church could not properly or successfully come within the sphere of political regulation. Even in the few instances in modern history of an approach to the theocratic State by small communities, in which Church membership and public citizenship went together, experience soon compelled the severance of Church from civic functions. It was soon found that the things of most vital moment to Christians could not be enforced upon citizens. It also appeared that many duties required by the State could be performed, and ought to be performed, without the imposition upon individuals of doctrinal, ecclesiastical, or spiritual tests.

The view of Nonconformists—in which they are being joined by a growing number of devout State Churchmen—is that the work of the Church of Christ can be done by no other authority than the Church

herself. While the State is engaged in repressing crime, curing illiteracy, raising taxes, annexing territory, training soldiers and sailors, and conducting such parts of education as are necessary to efficient industry and good citizenship, the Church proposes to her members a scheme of life so widely different that it requires an entirely different agency for its fulfilment.

No one would think of entrusting county or borough councils with the regulation of domestic life. Local authorities cannot control the sphere which is filled and swayed by parental and filial affection. And just as little can the coarse compulsions of the State intermeddle with the home-life of the Church without doing it irreparable harm. The work of the Church is not ordinary education, compulsory taxation, the enlistment of fighting men, the building of courts and jails, the acquisition of territory, the making of roads and drains, the determination of mining and fishing rights, and the adjustment of electoral power. While in no way disparaging, and in every way giving

moral support to, the State, the work of the Church extends to regions in which the writs of political sovereignty do not run. She is engaged in spiritual communion with God. She only lives as a Church as she appropriates the life of Him whom she praises and adores. She is constantly touching men in the inner realm of conscience, desire, motive, affection, and private conduct. Her law is not the work of an elected majority, but the law of Him who was "made flesh and dwelt among us," and who was "full of grace and truth." She has not reached her goal when men have paid taxes and avoided crimes and conquered enemies in the field. She desires men to discharge every honest obligation to the State, and to abstain from every crime. She will also pray for the success of the nation's arms whenever she thinks the cause of the war justifies confidence in the favour and help of God; but she will not mechanically echo at the "throne of grace" every catch-word of political and racial passion. She is taught by God to love and bless men

irrespective of nation, and she can never consent to war without pangs of grief and great searchings of heart.

Nonconformists hold that men ought not to be told by the State in what words and at what times they shall pray, in what buildings God shall be worshipped, what persons shall be ministers, what passages of Scripture shall be publicly read, what hymns and chants shall be sung, and how the finances of the Church shall be provided for. More emphatically still, Nonconformists deny the right, as they deny the competence, of Parliaments to issue authoritative expositions of the Christian religion and to bind them upon men's consciences. The choice of the ministry by the leaders of political party, or by the purchasers of advowsons, Nonconformists reprobate as a wanton usurpation of the rights of the spiritual society to which Christ promised His presence and guidance. They stand for the self-government of Christ's Church in all spiritual functions on the ground that no other Government is qualified or adequate, and on the still higher

ground that the Church's self-government, being the work of Christ-governed people, is really the work of Christ Himself through all who are truly joined to Him.

CHAPTER VI

HOSTILITY TO CHURCH ESTABLISHMENTS

NONCONFORMISTS are as strongly opposed to the establishment of any other Church as to State endowment and control of their own. In some countries the State recognises and subsidises the various Churches, however opposed to each other in articles of doctrine. In such cases a semblance of religious equality is preserved, but the State interferes with the full liberty of the Churches, and seems to treat religious convictions with indifference.

British Nonconformity has to array itself against a limited example of this evil policy in the concurrent establishment of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the

Church of England. The inconsistency of this dual establishment is discreditable to the State. The Church which is established north of the Tweed would be treated as a dissenting and Nonconformist Church south of the Tweed. Her late Majesty Queen Victoria always treated the Presbyterian Church of Scotland with profound respect, and expected her imperial and royal visitors to accompany her to its services at Crathie. This gave no small offence to the High Church party in both countries, and called forth from some of them protests more energetic than loyal.

But Nonconformists hold that the policy of establishment, whether of one Church or of many, cannot fail to be mischievous in the ways shown in the previous chapter. And when the Church established, as in the case of England, is the Church of a decided minority of the nation, the indictment of the policy becomes heavier still. A plausible case, though one far from convincing, might be made out for treating as the Church of the State a communion which included the whole of the worshipping population. But

no such apology can be made for the English Establishment. The denominations outside her pale are as truly Churches as herself, judged by every spiritual, New Testament, and practical test. Moreover the number of their communicants exceeds hers; their provision of sittings for public worship is greater; their churches have had to be built out of their own resources; their ministry has been maintained without help from the Tithe Fund allocated to the Anglican Church; their Sunday-school work is larger; and their contribution to the public reforms, by which the power and condition of the masses have been raised, has been far more earnest and effective. In 1900 the number of sittings provided by the Established Church was 6,979,150, while those of the Free Churches were 8,100,652, without including several of the smaller religious bodies. In the same year the Free Churches had no fewer than 1,910,302 communicants, 384,632 Sunday-school teachers, 3,283,608 Sunday-school scholars, 9,114 ministers, and 50,919 lay preachers. These are figures

which the State Establishment cannot parallel, and they demonstrate the virility and fruitfulness of Churches whose reliance is on spiritual power alone.

For a democratic State to keep such Churches, and such an aggregate of religious force, in a position manifestly inferior to that in which it places one selected Church, is in the highest degree impolitic. Nonconformists are not ashamed of their position, with all its senseless and irritating distinctions. Nor are they jealous of the political honours paid to the Establishment. They want none of them, and will have none of them. What they do want is to see the State acting loyally to the principles it professes, by placing all the Church communions to which its citizens may prefer to belong on the same footing before the law. For a State in which equal taxation and equal suffrage obtain, to set a special mark of favour on the doctrines and worship of a minority of its citizens, is a course fatal to the unity and peace of the nation. The effect on the privileged class is to bring it under false standards of judg-

ment, and to leaven it with a spirit of exclusiveness in social as well as in religious life. On the ministers of the patronised and endowed Church the effect is even more disastrous. Deeming themselves the only lawful ministers of the only national Church, they proceed to entrench themselves behind every form of affected superiority. They refuse, as a class, to enter into fraternal relations with Christ's ministers of the unfavoured Churches, be they as eminent as a Spurgeon, a Cairns, a Binney, or a Punshon. The Bishop of Truro, in his lectures to Divinity students at Cambridge, published in the volume entitled "The Parish Priest of the Town," strongly advised his clergy not to enter into friendly social relations with Nonconformist ministers, and gave as a reason for this course that they would next have to appear with those ministers on the platforms of the Bible Society. All this, and much more of it which extends through thousands of parishes in England, seems very puerile and may cause amused smiles. But it logically results from the

absurd attitude of the State towards different bodies of equally good citizens. Partiality and favouritism in public policy will inevitably produce conceit and priggishness in private character. False public relations breed strained personal relations between men. If the State were to declare that persons with dark eyes were human beings of the first class, and were to settle on them a pension of £20 a year, it is certain that the favoured section would make too much of their eyes and say sharp things of their pale-eyed neighbours. And wherein would the folly of this exceed the folly of a policy which confers special State prestige on persons who pray from a book, who are governed by diocesan bishops, who profess baptismal regeneration, and practise the eastward position?

The solidarity of English life is made impossible as long as this cause of disunion exists. Half the nation—and more than half—is made to feel that it is less to the State than another part of the population. Men who have done more, as their fathers

did more, to make the State what it is to-day, than have the adherents of established episcopacy, are virtually told that their behaviour in the matter of free conscience and self-government in Church affairs disentitles them to national status. They are in a corner, tolerated indeed in their eccentricity, but treated as a self-willed and dissentient element in the State.

Nonconformists hold that the State should treat all good citizens on equal terms, and should punish only bad ones. At present the English nation fails to carry out this sound principle. The very existence of a State Church gives rise to a debased form of politics, in which clerical interests, privileges, and domination are placed before every other consideration. The politics that would make for peace, for temperance, for education, and for the social uplifting of the poor, are deliberately sacrificed in order to keep the State in the ruts of Church ascendancy.

We have never yet seen what a united England can do in the higher walks of political reform. The disintegrating factor

of a privileged Church reduces the politics of a great number of its adherents to mere tactics of Church defence, and this again throws them into sinister alliances with the vested interests that flourish on war, poverty, and intemperance. The division and impotence of the nation are only equalled by the scandal to religion. No nation can be solidly one, or rapidly progressive, which so mismanages its business and institutions as to prevent nearly one-half of its citizens from throwing the force of their character and influence into the scale of politics on their moral side.

CHAPTER VII

THE FREEDOM OF THE STATE FROM ECCLESIASTICAL CONTROL

NONCONFORMISTS are equally removed from Erastianism and Romanism. They stand for a Free Church. But they stand equally for a Free State. The careful discrimination made by them between the spheres of Church and State implies no disparagement of the functions of the Commonwealth. If the State cannot take the place of the Church, it is because the State has its own place to take; and how noble that place is none have more emphatically declared than Nonconformists.

In English history, and the history of the United States in which the ideals of Non-

conformists have been realised on a colossal scale, the right of self-government in the Church inevitably linked itself with the assertion of the right of self-government in the nation. The battle for civil liberty was won by those who first entered the field as the soldiers of religious liberty. Men could not be lovers of freedom in the highest relations of all, without being fit for freedom, and pledged to freedom, in public life. Liberty of conscience in religion will soon prove itself the parent of liberty of conscience in all walks of duty.

It was never an easy matter to get the State free from ecclesiastical control. By a departure from Christ's teaching for which its clearness left them no excuse, men have ever been ready to spread the control of the Church over the whole field of national life. The Roman Church, and the Anglican Church in too numerous instances, have claimed dominion over the entire life of men, both as units and as States. Such claims are ill-founded and insolent. When the Church supposed itself to be in the

place of God, it soon asserted itself to be the State. Given the towering pretensions of a Hildebrand, the subjection of kings and peoples to ecclesiastical power soon follows. Let the Church once misread her vocation and she will soon exaggerate the sphere of her control.

True Protestantism is the rescue of the nation as much as it is the emancipation of the Church. Church history is often a story of the usurpation of State rights by fanatical hierarchs who believed themselves called of God to judge and govern the world. It was a long struggle—so long, that it is not yet over. How could the Church be clothed with Divine authority and not be supreme over secular rulers? That was the question to which Pope and Prelate, Hildebrand and Laud, would brook no adverse reply. They should have eliminated the gratuitous assumption in the first part of the question, and recognised the fact that they were the subjects, not the embodiments, of Divine authority. With far too little

argument they persuaded themselves that God's jurisdiction and the Church's were coterminous. This is where the sacerdotal Churches have gone upon the rocks. They could never see how God could govern the world except through Church machinery. They forgot that the Almighty can be honoured in the self-government of peoples as well as in the self-government of Churches. Moreover, they paid all too little respect to the nation as such, overlooking its nature as an expanded family, and ignoring God's purpose "to make of one blood all nations of men," and to determine for them severally "the bounds of their habitation," that, through the sympathies and duties of natural life, "they might seek after Him and find Him."

Clerical arrogance is seen in nothing more clearly than in its distrust of national initiative and its contempt for national authority. Clerical offenders were withheld from civil tribunals, and could only be tried by their peers. Kings could not be crowned by the nation, but only by the Head of the Church.

War had to be waged by secular princes whenever the Church desired a campaign against the heretical or the contumacious.

Before the Reformation the Roman Church was an integral factor in the civil government of every State in Europe. After the Reformation that Church remained such a factor only in the civil governments of Spain and Italy. To-day she is part of none of the civil governments of Europe. But though Italy has made Rome her capital, "Holy Church" is restive under the change, and she recently made the death of the King of Italy the occasion for a series of retaliatory affronts to Italy and the Monarchy.

Archbishop Laud was, in his own judgment, better entitled to govern England than its own Parliament. Birth, marriage, and burial are subjects of concern to every human being; but hardly yet has the sacerdotal Establishment conceded the right of the nation to attend to these three matters of its business by itself. The theory of the Prayer-book is that the child is not *born* a child

of God and that, apart from priestly rites of baptism, it cannot become so. It is scarcely possible even to-day to conduct a marriage in a Nonconformist church without bride and bridegroom being roughly reminded that the marriage of Nonconformists in their own churches by their own ministers is a right that has had to be wrung from an unwilling Establishment, and is still beset with limitations that would not be tolerated for a day in parish churches attended by Tory squires. Even when the solemnities of death enshroud a household, one of the first problems which in thousands of districts bereaved persons have to solve, is that of the pagan differences between "consecrated" and "unconsecrated" ground, and how many days' or hours' notice must be given to a clergyman whose services you do not want before you can have at the grave the comforting ministrations of one you wish to be there.

These annoyances are reminders of the efforts of the sacerdotal Church in the centuries past to take the life of the people

and the life of States under its obtrusive care.

Nonconformists will defend the freedom and spirituality of the Church of Christ to the last breath ; but they are equally sworn to defend the social and political rights of nations. It is as good for a nation to manage its own affairs as it is for a family to sweep its own doorstep. The Church can appeal to and strengthen the sense of duty in all citizens, but it can no more do the work of the citizens for them than it can breathe or walk for them. It is every nation's duty to keep order, to defend person and property, to put down public contaminations, to open good schools for its children, to care for its poor and afflicted classes, to protect its shores, light its streets, level its roads, reform its prisoners, combat disease, guard food and water supplies, encourage honourable marriage, and bury the dead. The nation is a nation in order that it may do these things, and is made a strong nation as it does them heartily and well. Members and officers of Churches acting as

citizens can take part in all these operations of the civilised State, and should do so all the better for being members of Churches that teach the noblest motive and adore the most perfect Example of duty. As schools of faith and character, the Churches should prove veritable well-heads of public influence and purification.

But the Churches have no right to legislate for the nation. Nor ought they to seat their ministers in the Legislative Chamber unless they have been elected by the citizens to be their legal representatives there.

The Churches have no right to enter Congresses of Nations as State Powers on equal terms with the plenipotentiaries of Governments. This was what the Papacy claimed to do recently at the Peace Conference at the Hague, but it is understood that the greatest Power of all—the United States—would not take part in a conference to which the Pope's envoy would have been admitted as representing a Sovereign Power. It is to be hoped that the British Government made a like protest.

The care of a democratic State for its people becomes every year a larger solicitude. But this is so only because the people grow more able year by year to help themselves. What free governments do for the people is only what the spirit of the people inspires them to do. Ministers of religion, when they are wise, rejoice to see the modern State absorbing more and more of those operations of organised society which used to be left to the chance and intermittent action of private persons. It is no defeat for the Churches when the State takes care of the poor or educates the children. Surely Christianity has won some of its best victories when great works of benevolence and development are adopted as the duty and business of the whole nation.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHURCH'S RIGHTFUL INFLUENCE IN NATIONAL AFFAIRS

NONCONFORMISTS have never gone to the opposite false extreme of treating Kings, Parliaments, and Local Governments as subjects with which the Church of Christ has no concern. I know, of course, that there are individuals who approach towards this position. The subject, moreover, is one which easily lends itself to confusion of thought. Argument flies from one pole to another. The State must not control the Church, Nonconformists are agreed. They are also agreed that the Church must not rule the State. These are short sentences, easy to write; and some persons imagine

that these simple statements exhaust the whole subject of the duty of the Church towards the State. But this is surely not the case. The nature and office of the Church of Christ forbid it.

When Nonconformists assent to the proposition that the Church should not be an organic factor in civil government, and should have no power of control over the legislative or administrative functions of the State, they do not mean that the Church should abstain from all comment on the proceedings of the State, and from all attempts to influence its action in favour of just and noble objects. It is still one of the songs of Israel, "*Let the people praise Thee, O God; let all the people praise Thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us.*" It is still one of the duties of the Church to offer "*supplications, prayers, intercessions, and the giving of thanks for all men; for Kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God*

our Saviour."[1] But if it is the duty of the Church to pray for Kings and Parliaments, Nonconformists have never hesitated to do something more when the state of the country called for it. The policy of States has an evident connection with the "godliness and honesty" of peoples. This was so even under the despotic rule of Roman emperors, when a successful sword, not a general election, determined who should govern. In England the Government is what the people make it, and it is certain that the people are to a large extent what religious influences have made them. There can be no escape from public obligations in a country where the Government rests on household suffrage. Even the man who does not go to the poll has a distinct influence on the course of public affairs. His abstention may turn the balance for or against one of the great divisions of opinion in the nation. It seems in these days almost superstitious heresy to contend that the pulpit should be silent on the duties or sins of the

[1] 1 Tim. ii. 1–3.

nation. The shopkeeper expects to be exhorted to practise honest dealing. The city clerk knows he will be warned against gambling and purloining. The maiden is properly taught to turn her heart from the vanity of dress and false praise. The heads of firms and factories are impressed with the responsibilities of property, wealth, and example. Even the little ones in the gallery are gravely told that they are what the seed is to the plant, what the acorn is to the oak, what the toiling insect is to the coral islet, and that their influence should be used to leaven society with truth, gentleness, and purity.

Who would complain of such counsels? It is certain that congregations hear such advice with pleasure and benefit, and feel that the preacher is only doing his simple duty when he bids individuals act on righteous principles.

And yet it is sometimes urged that for the preacher to speak of *national* duty is for him to interfere with what does not concern him. The morality of the business conduct of

employers may be discussed at length, but the morality of a public policy that affects the four hundred millions of China, the three hundred millions of India, or the home happiness of every British family, is quite a different matter.

It is indeed a different matter, in the sense of being a much larger matter ; but it raises no new question of principle. If it is part of the mission of the Church to teach men to behave justly, honestly, and humanely in their private affairs, it seems like trifling to say that it is no part of the duty of the Church to rebuke the sins of States, or to point out to statesmen, and to those who elect them, that they are answerable to God for their behaviour towards the races of mankind.

Of course I admit that there are limitations which must be observed by Churches in their references to public affairs. But are there no limitations to be observed in the Church's treatment of domestic, social, and commercial ethics? Limitation, however, is different from silence, and does not necessitate silence. The preacher must not speak without serious

occasion. Manifest public evils and dangers must be his warrant. Nor must he speak as a party declaimer or the mouthpiece of party organisation. He must speak because God has laid a burden upon his soul, and because he dreads the guilt of silence. He should speak only when a political question has passed into a moral and religious question of undoubted gravity. The political form of the matter will not excuse his silence, if at the core and heart of the thing the righteousness of God and the happiness or destruction of men are involved.

I need not say that the preacher's tone should befit the occasion which warrants his interposition, and that his treatment of the question should avoid the mistake of launching pretentious and detailed schemes from the pulpit. The Church is neither a Home Office nor a Foreign Office, and her message should be to the heart of peoples and rulers, a call to repentance and righteousness, a plea for the oppressed, and an uplifting before the citizens of a brotherly and Christian ideal of collective duty. With this, as circumstances

require, there may have to be criticism, and even denunciation. How is the right to be defined if the wrong is not to be condemned? How is a new path to be opened if the old way is not laid bare? The preacher is no more bound to be a flatterer of Governments than he is to be the eulogist of any class of the community who may violate Divine law. A mere censor he must not be. A censor sometimes he may be forced to be by a compulsion he cannot escape.

As against these views, it has lately been suggested that ministers are successors of the apostles, not of the prophets, and are therefore not bound to denounce what they deem to be State iniquities; that a minister would do well to keep off public platforms if he is not sure that his Church is solid behind him in his action; that congregations are not now solid in their political convictions, and that this alters the position of the minister; that the direct action of the Church and the pulpit in public affairs is "inexpedient, dangerous, and suicidal"; "that it is the Roman Catholic and not the Protestant

principle at all;" and that the direct action of the Church in public affairs has been a failure in Geneva, the Protectorate, and New England.

Now Nonconformists stand for the right of the Church and the minister, in grave conditions of the nation and its dominions, to give instruction, make comment, pass judgment, and utter protest. But this is not a Roman Catholic policy at all, but one essentially different. Such counsel, comment, and protest are not acts of usurpation. They do not make the Church an organic factor in the civil government. They are the discharge of a duty, which God has laid upon the Church, of being the great moral educator of men.

The Roman Church had for its policy the subjugation, not the education, of States. It claimed to work the machinery of government from its own engine-room. Protestant Nonconformity claims nothing of the kind. But its claim, though different, is none the less important, for it addresses the people, who are the electoral source of

public authority, on the moral aspects of the exercise of that authority. It tells men that Bulgarians and Armenians ought not to be massacred ; that considerations of humanity should take precedence of the greed of gain ; that State encouragement given to temptation and drunkenness is unworthy of the English kingdom ; that it is an oppression of conscience to tax men for the support of schools over which they have no control and in which they are attacked ; and that the ownership of land does not include the right to destroy the health and character of the poor. Where is the Roman Catholic element in this testimony ? And if the effect of it is at length to create a more tender and resolute public opinion that shapes itself in law and policy, that will not be because the Church has done any wrong to the State but because the Church has purified those springs of public policy which lie hidden in the souls of men.

Where, in any part of the modern world, has there been a Protestantism that did not seek to do this, and in some measure succeed

in doing it? On the other hand, if the Roman Catholic Church had gone no further than to persuade men that justice, mercy, and peace were God's law for nations, the pages of that Church's history would have been less deeply stained with tears and blood.

If it is said that the modern minister is not a successor of the prophets but of the apostles, Nonconformists will, I think, decline to have their moral liberty tied up with a very disputable theory of succession. If "the prophets" hung upon the great law of Love, as Christ said they did,[1] it would be strange that the teachings of the modern pulpit should not hang upon the same glorious support. When the prophet said—

> "Is not this the fast that I have chosen?
> To loose the bands of wickedness,
> To undo the heavy burdens,
> And to let the oppressed go free,
> And that ye break every yoke?"[2]

[1] Matt. xxiii. 40. [2] Isa. lviii. 6.

"Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save;
Neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear:
But your iniquities have separated between you and your God,
And your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.
For your hands are defiled with blood,
And your fingers with iniquity,"[1]

was he not anticipating the prophetic testimony of the Christian pulpit? The fact is that men and women would not sit in pews to listen to preachers whose preaching did not reproduce much of the message of the prophets of old time addressed to individuals and to States on private and on public duty.

One seems to catch the tone of the prophets in that great denunciation—

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive greater damnation."[2]

Christ was not a responsible citizen in a democratic State as the present-day preacher

[1] Isa. lix. 1–3. [2] Matt. xxiii. 14.

is, and as his congregation are citizens; but He "taught with authority" that it was a sin to rob the defenceless of their private property. This was a question of practical ethics, and one of a very invidious kind, but Christ has left the Church no precedent or warrant for shirking it. In this He was like the prophets, and surely the preacher, within the limits dictated by humility and conscience, need not keep back this part of the doctrine of Christ. There are many points of difference between the position of the ministry to-day and that of the apostles of old. He would be a rash man, however, who would say that the Paul who asked the centurion: "*Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?*" would have nothing to say on public affairs if he were speaking as a citizen, not on Mars' Hill but on Ludgate Hill, within two miles of a House of Commons in which he was constitutionally represented. The apostles were not responsible for the political conditions amid which they carried on their ministry unto death,

as we are responsible for those of our day. But judging from the tone and scope of such books as the Epistle of James and the Apocalypse, one would not care to say that the apostles, in the writings and addresses that have not come down to us, avoided public comment on matters of State. If they did avoid it, it was for reasons that do not apply to us. Our duty must be measured by the powers and responsibilities of British citizenship, which had no parallel in the Roman world of that day.

Nonconformists have not been accustomed to restrict their ministers to the utterance of just those public views on which they have known the congregation to be "solid." Congregations are rarely solid, in the sense of unanimity. Moreover, in the early stages of great questions, congregations are entitled to some guidance from their teachers, and often have an open mind until they have heard the moral side of the question touched upon by those whose mission it is to consider things as right or wrong, not merely as profitable or unprofitable in a material sense.

Many congregations waited to hear what was said from the pulpit about Governor Eyre's conduct to the natives of Jamaica before they knew what course to take.

Direct action of the Church on the State can only be wrong when the Church defrauds the people of their civil right. This it may do by getting itself made part of the legislative system, as in the House of Lords and in the ridiculous Legislatures of the Channel Islands. Or it may do it by encouraging the social persecution of citizens who oppose Church policy. It may also do it by creating disloyalty to national Governments, as the Roman Church is doing in Italy and France. Cases of boycotting like that recently tried in a Manchester Court, where an ecclesiastic tried to ruin a shopkeeper for not supporting the candidates of a particular Church at a School Board election, are instances of reprehensible direct action of the Church on the State. I should be prepared to condemn the oppressive system by which the later—not the original—Massachusetts colonists attempted to identify Church and State by

giving State rights only to members of the Church.

But the action which Nonconformists feel entitled and bound to take to-day is not direct action in that sense at all. It is simply that they insist on applying the Ten Commandments, and the Eleventh Commandment also, to national as well as personal dealings; and they do this by preaching and persuasion, not by converting Church organisation into election machinery.

This is a fundamental distinction. Denunciation of political usurpation has no bearing on moral instruction, and it is moral instruction which Christian Churches and ministers offer when they bid men fear and obey God in the discharge of public duty.

It is easy to pick out a few glaring mistakes in the application of Church influence to political organisation. But it is certain that the splendid services to human liberty performed by Holland, by the Revolution of the seventeenth century, and by the United States, would have been impossible had not the Christian Churches powerfully influenced

public opinion. The life of man is one life, and the duty of men is one duty, whether it is performed towards units or nations. If the pulpits of Scotland, Holland, the English Independents, and New England had been silent on the policy of States, men would not have been trained to build up the intellectual Protestantism of Scotland, the religious toleration of Holland, the constitutional system of England, and the remarkable school, college, university, and church policy of the United States. If the religious teaching of those times had entirely occupied itself with personal emotion and private character, part of the truth of God would have been suppressed, and the development of the world in God's justice would have been kept back for centuries.

Of course, if the Christian ministry is to be regarded as a mere profession, to be followed for livelihood, position, or fame; if every original, heroic, and sacrificial element is to be cast out of it; and if the preacher is to be just an official echo of Church feeling, when ascertained to be unanimous, then we

can understand the policy of non-committal and the rule of silence. But this view of the ministry would not be accepted by any section of Free Churchmen. It is too mercenary and degrading. And if this is so, we see no alternative but to continue the time-honoured liberty of the Nonconformist pulpit, exercised with that discretion in which the Free Churches have not failed. The free, unhindered proclamation of God's will for nations, as well as for seat-holders, must remain an integral part of the prophetic office of the Church. This is one of the things Nonconformists stand for. They cannot pledge themselves to be silent spectators of crime, or to defend criminals of State. A State Church may yield to the temptation always to say smooth things of the power which accords it pecuniary and legal privilege. A Free Church has no such temptation, and it ought not to give way to another temptation, quite as real, though different in origin. I mean the temptation only to say the things that will not displease numerous or influential hearers.

CHAPTER IX

NON-MIRACULOUS SACRAMENTS

NONCONFORMISTS do not entirely agree in their views and practice of the Christian Sacraments. Notably the Society of Friends holds that sacraments should be dispensed with as likely to endanger spiritual religion. It should be said of the Friends that while their fellow-Nonconformists regret that they make no ceremonial commemoration of the Lord's death, they are fully alive to the priceless services rendered by Friends to the cause of spiritual religion. If they do not commemorate Christ's sufferings by a rite almost universally observed, no body of Christians has done more, in proportion to its numbers, to commemorate and carry on

the mission of mercy and peace which brought the Saviour from Heaven.

Nonconformists have arrived at practical unanimity in their view and use of the Lord's Supper—partly because they have followed the Scriptures; partly because they have generally avoided the imposition of dogmatic explanations upon the Churches; and last, but not least, because they have so largely agreed in rejecting sacramentarian exaggerations of the purpose and import of the rite. If the Free Churches have drawn up no formula as a binding exposition of the Communion, they are much nearer together than if they had done so. At least they know what is *not* their mind on this question. They reject the *Mass*—both name and thing. They do not believe in *Transubstantiation*. To them this is not only a baseless, but also a revolting doctrine. They would never have become Nonconformists if their minds could have been credulous enough to believe that the whole of the bread and wine in the Eucharist is converted by consecration into the Body and Blood of Christ, so that Christ

in His human and Divine natures is entirely contained in the elements, and with such effect that the whole Christ is present with the same completeness in each particle of the bread and in each drop of the wine. This is the Roman doctrine. Against this pagan perversion of the primitive teaching Nonconformists resolutely stand, and in so doing happily associate themselves with a multitude of Evangelical Christians in the State Church itself.

Nonconformists reject with equal decision the doctrine that the Communion is a Propitiatory Sacrifice offered to God for the living and the dead. This Roman caricature of our Lord's intention in instituting the rite is being carefully copied and acted out by many of the clergy of the Anglican Church. The Articles of Religion of that Church expressly repudiate and condemn the view that the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice of Christ, but this does not hinder such clergy, though they have subscribed the Articles, from teaching that error to their flocks. Nonconformists hold that if the English clergy intend to follow the decrees

of the Council of Trent they should no longer eat the bread of a Church which rejects those decrees.

Nonconformists separate themselves just as clearly from the Orthodox Greek Church, which is at one with the Church of Rome in regard to Transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the Mass, and a ceremonial propitiation for the sins of the world. Nonconformists carry their differences still further. They are not able to adopt as their own all the sacramental theories of the Continental Reformers as to the grace imparted in the Eucharistic service, and as to the mode of the presence of Christ in the symbolical elements. The Lutheran teaching embraced the doctrine of the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the sacrament, not by transubstantiation, but by consubstantiation. But to Nonconformists both views are untenable. Indeed they are practically identical. Bread and wine that are necessarily accompanied by the body and blood of Christ in corporeal actuality, are scarcely to be distinguished from bread and wine converted into the body and blood of

Christ. Nonconformists may be said to blend ideas from Zwingli and from Calvin in their view of the Lord's Supper. Those ideas are, perhaps, not so much opposed as they are complementary to each other. With Zwingli, the Lord's Supper is to us an impressive and blessed commemoration of the sacrifice once offered. With him we find symbols of the broken body in the elements of the feast. But just as, to the great Swiss opponent of Luther, the Lord's Supper was also a sublime act of spiritual communion with Christ, so the Free Churches believe with Calvin that in the Lord's Supper Christians spiritually partake of the life of the ascended and heavenly Christ, who still gives Himself to His own. Because of what the feast commemorates, and also because of its Divine origin and affecting nature, it becomes a means of unequalled value for realising personal union with Christ. It not only looks to the past and pictures forth a sacrifice completed far back in history, but it becomes a great communion between a living Christ and an adoring Church. It is not the only means of communion the

Church enjoys with Him who has pledged His perpetual presence to His people. All scenes and acts of fellowship with one another, used by Christian societies, fail of their purpose if they are not also scenes and acts of fellowship with the Saviour. But Nonconformists have no difficulty in believing that a particular power and sacredness attach to a service designed and appointed by Christ Himself; a service charged with the memory of His passion; and a service eloquent with the tokens of His sacrifice. The Christ who is near to His own at all times, seems then to be nearer still. The union with Him, which we know can be claimed and realised in home and office, in workshop and sick-chamber, in crowds and solitudes, on city streets and on vast oceans, is more triumphantly gained when His people, in a united act of devotion, seem to have Calvary before their eyes. Then they enter together, with hushed and trembling hearts, into deeper communion with the "Lamb that was slain," who now says to them at His Table, "*Abide in Me, and I in you.*"

There is little in Article XXVIII. of the Church of England on the "Supper of the Lord," with which Nonconformists can disagree. But in the Catechism, and elsewhere in the Book of Common Prayer, language is used, suggestive of the taking of the corporeal body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, which must mislead many and is naturally relied on by the Romanising party in the Establishment as supporting their practices. To say that "the body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful," is to suggest what is false. Nonconformists rejoice in a much more real presence than can be given in perishable symbols. The presence which Christ promised to His people "to the end of the world" was not made dependent upon any rite or ceremony. The rites are sacred because they bear witness to the Presence, and help us to enter into union with it for evermore.

Perhaps the position generally held by Nonconformists on the Lord's Supper has never been put into clearer or weightier words than were used by the Assembly of Divines

at Westminster in the seventeenth century. They declared it to be "for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of [Christ] Himself in His death; the sealing all benefits thereof to true believers; their spiritual nourishment and growth in Him; their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe to Him; and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with Him, and with each other as members of His mystical body. In the sacrament Christ is not offered up to His Father, nor any real sacrifice made at all for remission of sins of the quick or dead, but only a commemoration of that one offering of Himself by Himself upon the Cross, once for all, and a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto God for the same. The outward elements in this sacrament duly set apart to the uses ordained by Christ, have such relation to Him crucified as that truly, yet sacramentally only, they are sometimes called by the name of the things they represent—to wit, the body and blood of Christ—although in substance and nature they truly remain truly and only bread and wine.

Worthy receivers outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified and all benefits of His death."

When we come to Baptism, a line of cleavage appears in the Free Churches to which there is no parallel in regard to the Lord's Supper. The cleavage, however, does not affect the central question of this chapter. Neither by the advocates of adult (or believer's) baptism, nor by those of infant baptism, is it asserted that baptism operates the regeneration of its subject. The Church of England and the Church of Rome alike teach that Baptism confers a new *life*, a new *character*, and a new *relation to God*. The priest, in those Churches, undertakes to "make" a child "the child of God" who was not so before. The details of the Roman Catholic ceremony of baptism are more elaborate and more offensive to reason and reverence, but baptism in both Churches proceeds on the assumption that the child is

by birth not much better than a little animal, with no natural tie to the Divine fatherhood, and cut off from God's family until the priest has changed its nature by a miraculous rite. If these assumptions were correct, Nonconformists would perhaps tolerate the Roman method of baptism with its repulsive accessories. But Nonconformists reject the assumptions and the ceremonial too. The questioning of the godfathers, their demand that the Church should give the child "eternal life," the breathing of the priest in the child's face, the exorcism of the evil spirit from the child, the putting of salt—after it has been "blessed"—into the child's mouth, the rubbing of the wetted thumb on the child's ears and nostrils, the repetition of the word *Ephphatha*, and the anointing of the child with oil between the shoulders in the form of a cross, constitute a ceremonial of which it is scarcely possible to speak with gravity.

The Anglican ceremonial is more conformable to good taste, but the same underlying error vitiates it, namely, that the Church can

work a miracle in the child's nature, and do for it what the Creator has not thought fit to do, *i.e.*, make it "a child of God." Nonconformists, therefore, can no more adopt the Anglican than they can the Roman rite. For whether the Free Churches baptize by sprinkling infants or by immersing those of older years, they attribute no saving efficacy to the ordinance. They are not prepared to hold, with Augustine, that regeneration by the Holy Spirit, though always distinguishable from the external rite, necessarily and simultaneously accompanies its administration by the Church as the Body of Christ. Nonconformists cannot go so far.

The Baptists, from the days when Zwingli entered the field against them in his "*Elenchus contra Catabaptistas*" (published in 1527), down to the emigration of Roger Williams to Boston, Mass., in 1630, and on to our own time, have held firmly to the view that baptism should only be "given to all who have been taught repentance and change of life, and who in truth believe that through Christ their sins are blotted out, and the sins of

all who are willing to walk in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and who are willing to be buried with Him into death, that they may rise again with Him." [1] In this case there is no mistaking the meaning of the rite. It is a confession of personal faith. It is not the act of sponsors, but of the baptized persons themselves. It is the act of such as have found life in Christ already, and who, by this ordinance, declare their purpose to follow Him, in suffering and death if necessary, and to rise with Him into the eternal life of obedience and glory. Baptism, as thus understood and practised, is divided by the whole diameter of thought from the rite of the Roman and Anglican Churches. Whatever may be urged as objections to the Baptist view, and on whatever grounds the other Free Churches adhere to the baptism of infants, it is certain that the world owes an immeasurable debt to those who made the most emphatic protest in human power against the superstitions and usurpa-

[1] "Early Confession of Faith," quoted by Zwingli, 1527.

tions of the Church of Rome. When we recall the bitter hostility they encountered, partly because of their rejection of religious practices then well-nigh universal, and partly from the association of their movement with political troubles, we cannot withhold from them the admiration due to them as among the very bravest and staunchest of Nonconformists. In Massachusetts their leader suffered ostracism from the Puritan State for denying the power of the civil magistrate in matters of religion. He was more faithful to the ideals of the Pilgrim Fathers of the *Mayflower* than were many of the later emigrants. The position of the State of Rhode Island, which he founded, and the vast extension of the Baptist denomination (with 44,000 churches in 1894) in the United States, bear witness to the effect of his labours.

It must not be thought, however, that bodies of Christians like the Wesleyans, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and the later Methodist Churches claim a miraculous effect for their rite of Infant Baptism. They

are thoroughly with the Baptists in denying the tenet of Baptismal Regeneration. Whatever view they take of the meaning and propriety of their own ordinance, they do not claim for one moment that it is of saving efficacy. They may make Baptism chiefly a dedicatory act. Others may treat it as a service of thanksgiving. Probably in all observances of the ordinance the Divine fatherhood of the babe, and the obligations thence resulting, are prominently recognised. But in every case the need of the Holy Spirit's influence for children and parents alike is confessed, and His aid is earnestly invoked.

It is no part of the object of this work to judge between modes and theories of Nonconformist baptism. Such differences as exist are best treated with respect, because they are associated with the maintenance of some important principle or the expression of deep feelings of the parental heart.

In recent years the only difficulty as to Sacraments that has arisen among Free Churchmen has been occasioned by celebrations of the Communion under the auspices

of the Free Church Councils. In some districts, and notably in Wales, Baptists hold "strict" views of the Communion, *i.e.*, they make baptism a condition of admission to the Lord's Supper. This view, it should be said, very largely prevails among the powerful Baptist Churches of America. "Strict" Baptists say that Free Church Councils ought not to expect them to join in the Lord's Supper on terms different from those which regulate the Communion in their own Churches. They profess an earnest desire for general Christian fellowship with the other Churches in the Councils, but they hold that the Councils were not formed for the purpose of prejudging questions of Baptism and Communion. Some of them say that they cannot become members of the National Council if they would thereby be committed to practices of celebrating the Communion that violate their conscientious beliefs. They have, therefore, asked the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches no longer to include an observance of the Lord's Supper in its annual programme.

The danger attending the raising of this question lies in the fact that the members of the National Council may seem challenged in their right to hold the Communion. There may be the appearance of this, where of course it is not intended.

One suggestion made for meeting the difficulty, which is, I believe, practically confined to Wales, is that the Communion arranged for when the National Council visits a city should be unofficial in character, and should be organised by a committee representing all the local Churches willing to co-operate in the service. This proposal might perhaps command favourable consideration if those who object to the present arrangements would show elasticity on minor points.

For example, the National Council should be able to notify such a united Communion service in its printed and spoken announcements. This could be done in a way to avoid misconstruction.

Another way out of the difficulty would be for those who cannot attend "open" Communion to join the Council notwith-

standing, and to take part in every other form of fellowship. Perhaps this would be the easiest and most generous line to take. But either side should be capable of generosity in arrangements concerning an ordinance in which the words, "*Having loved His own—He loved them unto the end*," were first spoken.

CHAPTER X

THE BODY OF CHRIST

FREE CHURCHMEN are believers, not disbelievers. Their denials are only the other front of their affirmations. If they reject the view of the Sacramentarians, that the body of Christ can be found in a manufactured wafer, it is because they believe in a real body of Christ. If they reject the view that the power and presence of Christ in His Church are embodied in the priesthood, it is because they joyfully trace His power and presence in the whole company of the redeemed. Apologists for priestly authority often ask us to accept the opinion that the Incarnation has been continued in the Church, and did not terminate

at the sepulchre or at the Ascension. Nonconformists have no hesitation in accepting this doctrine. They firmly hold that Christ has perpetuated His coming in the flesh. But this prolonged incarnation does not shut Christ up in an official clergy, but rather gives Him a dwelling-place in the hearts of "the holy Church throughout all the world." Nonconformists believe that Christ is given to be "Head over all things to the Church which is His body, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all." In this faith they live and labour, and in it they hope to die. But this re-incarnation of the Blessed One they will have confined to no class, sect, or nation. They affirm Christ's Body to be wherever His Spirit manifestly is. All societies and souls actuated by the energies of that Spirit they regard as part of the Body in which it has pleased the Saviour to make His continuous home. So far from thinking that denominational uniformity and limitation are required to give reality and definiteness to that Body, they are convinced that a Presence so pervasive and glorious will

transcend every ecclesiastical fence-mark, and overflow to all true and trusting hearts.

Nonconformists are prevented by the greatness of Christ's own thought from seeking to parochialise, or even to nationalise, the later Incarnation. They remember that this Bread was given "for the life of the world." They read the gracious words, "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," with an understanding of their import which makes it impossible for them to assign to the Saviour any narrower spiritual residence on earth than the whole body of believers. Nothing could be more perilous or irreverent than to seek to link the mystery of Christ's perpetual presence to any one organisation. The Church may fail to apprehend and reflect Christ. So far from being able to enshrine all the grace and power of the adorable Word within itself, it may conspicuously fail in loyalty to Him. It may change the simplicity of His law into an involved casuistry. Instead of purifying the secular State in which it lives,

it may submit to its rule, live out of its treasury, extenuate its crimes, and emulate its methods of repressive severity towards dissentients in opinion. If Christ could only have looked out upon the world through this one window, then a large part of mankind would never have seen His face. Woe unto us when we pretend to embody the infinite Grace in one flawed institution! The Atlantic has never been drawn back into one river-bed, and the risen Christ has never been made the *peculium* of one Church.

Nonconformists, therefore, are believers in the Body of Christ in all its fulness. They see Christ in His entire people, and hope that they, too, have a real share in the plenitude of His resurrection life. When they are told, perhaps by some immature curate, with more than apostolic emphasis, that they are outside the "body of Christ," they are content to be banned by him so long as they know that they are embraced by their Lord. In every village they see the body of the second Incarnation represented, not only before the "altars" of what used to be called

a Protestant establishment, but equally in the praying Churches of Baptists, Wesleyans, Independents, and Primitive Methodists.

In every nation where men have been brought together to learn and obey His will, and to nourish their inward life by communion with Him, they gladly recognise the Body of Christ under every difference of language, political rule, and Church polity.

Nonconformists do not lay claim to perfection in charity and brotherly love towards all mankind. But they strive to regard Christians of all nationalities with the respect due to those who share in the spirit and personal indwelling of their Divine Lord. The most potent check that could be put to the growth of jealousy and hatred between nations, would be for them to look upon each other in the light of Christ's presence with His people. He is theirs, as well as ours. It ought, therefore, to be hard for us to hate them, and harder still to accept anybody's representations of them as only hypocrites. In claiming for the universal Christian Church a place in the Body of Christ, Non-

conformists are doing more than they know to hasten that era of brotherhood when men will no longer wish to punish other nations by bloodshed for the crime of not thinking the same civic thoughts, or moving in the grooves of public action.

CHAPTER XI

THE EQUALITY OF BELIEVERS IN SPIRITUAL STANDING

THE only way out of Clericalism is through the principle of spiritual equality. Either Christ dwells in His people, or He does not. If He does, they stand related to Him on equal terms.

The very word "equality" calls for disclaimers of meanings not intended. Just as social equality does not mean uniform income or equal brain, so equality of believers does not mean spiritual insight and excellence possessed in equal degrees by all believers. It should, perhaps, be granted to every man that in stating his case for what he feels to be a noble principle, he does not wish to reduce it to

absurdity at the outset. But this is not always done.

A form of equality in insight, ability, and character that was not found even in the apostles, will not be claimed by any one for the millions of Christ's servants. But Nonconformists assert that in Jesus Christ there is no clergy or laity; no different orders of spiritual being; no different kinds of truth, forgiveness, holiness, love, adoption, sonship, indwelling, union. Natural ability, personal influence, learning, office, and social standing differ among members of Churches as they do among members of political societies. But just as all members of a political society may be *English*, so all members of a Church are *Christian*. As Christians, ministers may have much to do to overtake the example of some of the members, who could never be preachers at all. The measure in which the risen Christ dwells in men can never be determined by distinctions of Church office. The doorkeeper might in some instances remind men of Christ more forcibly than the sidesman, elder, or deacon. Men take knowledge of

the light from the shining. The force felt locates the source of power. There is no wish here to belittle the ministry. The object is to exalt the commonalty of Christians by exalting Christ in them. Because of what He is to them—because He has loved them—because He has washed them from their sins in His own blood, and made them a kingdom and priests unto God and His Father, it is impossible to oust them from the status thus conferred upon them, or to set up an order of official persons in the Church for whom a preternatural sanctity and authority can rightly be claimed. The clergy are drawn from the laity. The qualifications for ministry are present in men before the status of minister is conferred. It is because of what men are as men, and because of what Christ is in the life of unofficial disciples, that choice is made of persons to fill offices of leadership and teaching in the Church. The Christian grace precedes the public office, and is the great and Divine element in men whatever their place in Church organisation.

Nonconformists believe in a priesthood of

men and women ministering at the wide altars of life. The altar is not at the east end of churches, but on every side, and in the midst, of a consecrated life. Nonconformists believe that nothing offered by the clergy at parochial or cathedral altars is so sacred as the living sacrifices presented to God in the daily love and praise, obedience and self-denial of His people. Many a minister is more of a priest out of the pulpit than in it, because, in his daily life,—perhaps of suffering for conscience' sake, or in his loved ones, or through other circumstances—he renders a more entire sacrifice than that of the preaching office, noble as that office is.

It is claimed for the sacerdotal priest that he is a special channel of Divine grace. He is privileged indeed, if his power to conduct that grace to men is as unquestionable as the power of some of the poorest of his flock. Nonconformists believe that no minister can stand nearer to God, or be more fully an instrument of Christ's power than are many Christian mothers and fathers. Jesus loved John the great apostle, who looked so deeply

into the Incarnate Mystery; but he also loved Mary and Martha and Lazarus, though they held no rank in His Church. If the congregations owe an immense debt to the culture, teaching, and godly life of the ministry, what is the debt of the ministry to the congregations? The ministry is, in fact, the product of the sanctified life of the commonalty of the Church. The faith which appeared in the official Timothy was first in his grandmother Lois, and in his mother Eunice. His talents and conspicuousness made him a more notable figure in the Church, but in his spiritual life he drank at the same fountains where the thirst of their souls was quenched. No minister who has been a good visitor can have gone home from a round of pastoral calls without feeling that his spiritual gain from intercourse with the flock has been as great as theirs can have been from his preaching or prayers. He has been unobservant, or unfortunate in his sphere of labour, if he has not often seen the glory of the Christ he preaches reflected in the home scenes and affections of His people.

Nonconformists are glad that there is a growing recognition in the various Churches of the conception of the Body of Christ as set forth in these pages. They believe that the interests of the kingdom of God require that the various Churches should withdraw their energies from barren contentions for exclusive rights. The Saviour possesses the only exclusive right that need concern us, for it is His right to inhabit, energise, and direct the whole Church of God.

Dreary and forlorn in the last degree is the position of any Church which is searching for the title-deeds of an exclusive presence of Christ in its symbols, priests, and organisation. It should be the happiness of each Church to admit the presence and the power of Christ in all other communions that serve and honour Him. The Archbishop of York paid visits to Russia to attest fellowship between the Anglican Church and the Orthodox Greek Church of Russia. It is to be hoped that while in Russia he reminded the Holy Synod that the Stundist Nonconformist Christians of Russia are also part of the Body

of Christ, and that their sufferings under the infamous persecution of the Orthodox Church are felt in the Heart that was once broken for us all.

Nothing so awakens in us the consciousness of Christ's presence as any degree of His likeness seen in His people. By many indubitable signs of this kind the Master betokens His approach to us, and the unity of His Church in Him. When these signs are read clearly and their meaning laid to heart, no Church will be able to claim lordship over another Church. No Church will wish to do so. To inflict injustice and suffering on one of the least of these His Churches is to be blind to His presence; or if not blind, wilfully to wound Him in the feelings of those He loves.

CHAPTER XII

THE CHURCH'S RIGHT TO MINISTER

NONCONFORMISTS, almost without exception, provide a special ministry of pastoral oversight and public teaching. They rejoice to hear the gospel preached by men who are best equipped and qualified for the duty. They think no natural gifts and no accomplishments of learning too excellent to be placed at the Master's disposal for this service. They have sustained and reverenced men in the ministry whose names have a place in Church history, and some of them on the wider page of national story. The roll is a long one, and only a few names can be given; but they are such names as Owen, Howe, Robinson, Roger Williams, Baxter, Bunyan,

Wesley, Whitfield, Carey, Judson, Chalmers, Fuller, Hall, Moffat, Livingstone, Knibb, M'Call, Jay, Morrison, Baptist Noel, Bunting, Christmas Evans, John Elias, Vavasour Powell, Howell Harris, Spurgeon, Parsons, Miall, Richard, Roby, Punshon, Binney, Martineau, Dale, Legge, Vince, Reynolds, and others, whose names are in the book of life. These names show how lofty a place the pastor and the preacher have filled in the Free Churches. The colleges of those Churches also bear witness to their care for the ministry.

But Nonconformists stand for something more than a professional ministry—if I may use that adjective with great respect. They stand for a ministering Church. They stand for the Church's right to minister to itself, and for the appointment of a minister as the exercise of this right.

In Churches under sacerdotal authority the ministry constitutes the Church. The voice of the higher clergy is called the pronouncement of the Church. The prerogative of bringing a child into filial relation with God is vested in the clergy. The communicants

are in the attitude of subjects to rulers. They do not form, or govern, or provide the ministry for a Church. The only priests are those in surplices, and their appointment is in no sense an act of the communicants, but flows from papal, diocesan, or political authority. The worshipping people are denied any power of ordering the ministrations.

At this point Nonconformists define their position. They claim the ministry as the function of the Church. They will not allow that the ministry *is* the Church. In some of the Free Churches a minister must be a member of the Church before he can be elected its pastor. It is the duty of the Church to minister to itself. If no one is available who has had college tuition and public ordination, it is the right of the Church to treat its members as ministers, and to call upon some of their number to preside, preach, and administer the ordinances. No Nonconformist believes that the meaning and value of the rite of baptism, or of the Communion service, would

be lost if they were conducted from time to time by unordained Church members of proved fitness. It sometimes happens, when the child of the minister has to be brought into the church for dedicatory baptism, that one of the elders or deacons is singled out to perform the ceremony. Nor has it ever been observed that less of innocent light gleamed in the child's face because one called a layman declared the Divine Fatherhood of the babe.

Death pays surprise visits to most homes. The hour and the day of his coming cannot be foretold. It has happened more than once, when the light of the Sabbath morning lay upon the earth, and the congregation was gathered about the pulpit, that the minister could not appear. The dread visitant had come to the manse. His child was dead! The sermons were ready, the hymns chosen, the hour of public praise at hand. But a silence such as no traveller has felt in mid-desert had come upon wife and husband as they looked on the unspeaking marble face, and there could be no preaching that day—

none, perhaps, for weeks. Where was the minister then? *The* minister, as an official, was reduced to silence; but the ministry, as the power of Christ's people to "comfort and edify one another" (1 Thess. v. 11), was in full force. The Church gave itself to prayer, one of its number leading the service and saying fitting words. It was a service long remembered; it may be it will never be forgotten. The call for such self-ministry was as sudden as it was sad, and it may be said that circumstances so abnormal furnish no precedent for the ordinary life of the Church. It is true the arrangement was unusual, but the reserved power of the Church then drawn upon is always resident in the society of Christ's disciples. The right of ministry belongs to all who enjoy union with Christ. It has sometimes been noticed that a vacancy in the pastorate has evoked such mutual solicitude and helpfulness that the Church has gained in power and numbers during the period. Nonconformists acknowledge the duty of supporting and honouring an official ministry, but they

can conceive of no circumstances that would entirely deprive their Churches of ministry. The right to communicate spiritual light and help is inherent in the Church, being based on the relation to Christ into which its members have entered. Since all partake of Him, all are entitled to put forth in the Church, in ways marked out by personal aptitude, knowledge, and experience, such ministries of prayer, praise, visitation, management, teaching, and exhoration as are desired.

It has ceased to be matter of argument that the Churches of the New Testament age both took this view of the ministry and acted upon it. The Church was never reduced by them to the status of subjects of ecclesiastical rulers, who, with magnificent aloofness, received the law in the clouds and defined it for the common folk waiting in the valley below. This is not St. Paul's view of the position of the Church in Thessalonica. He calls it "*The Church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" It is local, but it is a real Church, and the basis

of the churchmanship of its members is their union with the Divine Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. He gives thanks for them "all" on account of the wide and gracious ministry carried on by the Church as a whole. Leaders and teachers they no doubt had, and held in love and reverence; but the work of the Church is treated by the apostle as the work of all. He remembers before God their "work of faith, and labour of love;" how they "received the Word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost;" and that they were "ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia," because that from them "sounded out the Word of the Lord," both in and beyond Macedonia and Achaia. No Church in the entire history of Christianity ever enjoyed greater privileges of ministry than that of Thessalonica. To them was sent a Timothy, to establish them and comfort them concerning their faith, so that no man should be moved by the afflictions then coming upon them. Then they had had visits from St. Paul himself, and so came under the force of

his unique personality. If ever a Church could rightly and safely be subdued to a single will, and brought under the absolute rule of a superior mind, here is an instance. Others may be found in the New Testament. The ministry of St. Paul to that one Church in Macedonia possessed an energy that has shaken and an illumination that has enlightened the whole Christian world from that time onward. His words, in his letters to them, touch on all the great things of life and destiny with a depth, tenderness, and power that transcend almost every other example of pastoral exhortation. He had suffered in their midst. He had sought no glory of them or of others, nor would he ever become a burden on their resources. He had cherished them as a nurse cherisheth her children. He was willing to impart his very soul to them. He challenged their judgment on every part of his conduct. The report of their faith and charity comforted him. He longed to come to them that he might perfect that which was lacking in their faith. He prays the Lord to in-

crease their love one for another, and to establish their hearts unblameable in holiness before God. He reminds them that those who are departed are sleeping in Jesus, and that God will bring them with Him. He calls them children of light and of the day. They are not to sink in sleep and drunkenness, but to "put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation." The final chapter of his first Epistle is a sublime and affecting summary of Christian duty, both on the ethical and spiritual side.

But even this great apostle had no thought of absorbing the liberty and ministry of the Church in his own prerogatives. He never minimised his authority amongst them as a missionary, teacher, and Church founder. His tone is sometimes that of command, as at other times it is that of entreaty. But he leaves the Church a self-governing and self-ministering Church. The Word he had preached to them had effectually worked in them. They were his crown of rejoicing. They showed love one towards another.

Not only so, but they manifested Christian affection towards the brethren in all Macedonia. They were to cheer the Church by speaking to one another of the resurrection of eternal life. While they were to honour and love all Church officers, and special teachers, they were themselves to undertake important duties: to "warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all." They were to read Paul's epistle to the Church. They were to take action in the case of disorderly members of the Church, and to withdraw from them.

It may be said with confidence that if a Church which was so new and inexperienced, and which had so mighty a counsellor as the Church at Thessalonica, had the right to minister to itself, that right must be vested in every fully constituted local Church.

CHAPTER XIII

SPIRITUAL, NOT CEREMONIAL, CONSECRATION

SHORTLY after a great family bereavement, Dr. Joseph Parker startled his congregation by exhibiting a certificate issued to him at the time of the interment of his beloved wife. The paper contained in large letters the word—UNCONSECRATED. The preacher devoted a few sentences of indignant eloquence—such as he is master of—to the offensive headline. His scathing indictment of the practice of extending sectarian distinctions to the very ground in which Christ's people are laid to rest, was entirely just. Nonconformists stand for the abolition of this pagan discrimination between parcels of ground used for purposes of burial by the local authority.

Nothing is more remarkable than the way in which England toys with superstition and injustice—especially where the feelings of Free Churchmen are concerned. After a long struggle against what seemed to be impenetrable stupidity, Nonconformists succeeded in obtaining the right to be married in their own churches, and to be buried in public cemeteries by their own ministers. But the wisdom of Parliament was not equal to a fair and clear settlement of either question. Nothing so frightens many of our legislators as the spectre of a principle. If they take up a principle it is only to drop it. They love to tell us that the English people are not logical, and that compromise is the soul of our policy. It seems so very dangerous to set a wrong thing entirely right. So Nonconformist marriages were made more costly for the parties to the contract than marriages in the State Church, and the minister—up to 1900—was not allowed to complete the transaction without the presence of an official of the State. In public cemeteries, moreover,

Parliament allowed half the ground to be called "consecrated," while the other half was to be called "unconsecrated." The right to bury their dead in ground paid for out of public rates was only given with this accompaniment of insult. If these are the conditions on which Parliament emancipates Nonconformists, what must have been the conditions under which our fathers lived before toleration? The charity shown us by aristocrats and prelates of the House of Lords falls far below the ancient and famous example of the sons of Heth in their dealings with Abraham (Genesis xxiii. 6): "*In the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.*" The refusal of the Church of England to have its dead buried in the same plots of land with the descendants of Milton, Howe, Williams, and Wesley, proves that a State Church may be as harmful to the finer feelings as it is subversive of elementary rights.

Nonconformists stand for the sacredness of

the *use*, not for the sanctity of the *ceremony*. Consecration does not flow from the blessing of a bishop, or from association with a particular denomination, but from the nature of the use which buildings and places serve. A spot at Bethany—and it was a grave—was made eternally sacred by the Saviour's tears. There was no Christian bishop ready to consecrate, but the sorrow of the "great Shepherd of the sheep" lent ineffable distinction to the ground. And the Saviour's interest in all His people resting in death has a consecrating efficacy for the places of their burial. It would be like mockery to compare the ceremonial consecration of cemeteries with that of Christ's relation to the pious dead. St. Paul speaks of these as "them also that sleep in Jesus." Death for them, therefore, is union with Christ, and rest in Him. And this carries with it elements of consecration infinitely sweet and potent. If Christ's people whom we have known and loved are sleeping in Jesus, no ecclesiastical magic can hallow the ground where they lie. Seeing, too, that all who have passed away in

the faith of Christ have entered this realm of highest privilege, there is something in the nature of vulgar officiousness in any attempt to divide the sleeping host by placing them in opposite camps of earth.

As with graves, so with other things. Nonconformists find sacredness in the use. Where Livingstone lived, taught, and died in Africa, will for ever be consecrated ground. Not a few noble missionaries of the Anglican Church have invested other scenes with like sacredness. There are sand-pits, glens, cottages, old and ill-shaped chapels, dungeon walls, remnants of ancient pulpit furniture, rocks on which pilgrims landed, books which our fathers—and our mothers—read or wrote, that have been made sacred by acts of worship, by persecutions suffered, by world-moving changes, by noble hands that wrote, by loving eyes that read, by witnesses that stood firm in tempests of insult and under threats of death from enemies who had the power and will to destroy. To the sacredness of things and places with such a history, the hearts of Nonconformists respond.

It is the same with other ceremonial consecrations. The bread and wine of the Lord's Supper seem to us to need no priestly blessing. The Saviour destined them to the symbolic use they have served through thousands of years, and Nonconformists take the bread with the Master's benediction upon it. They would as little think of blessing a field of corn, or a sunrise, as of imparting an artificial sanctity to the elements of the memorial and thanksgiving feast.

So with ministers. Nonconformists hold that the minister is not an exception to Christian human nature, but a good instance of it. They think that the minister is consecrated by Christ's love for him, by His use of him, and by the minister's choice of the public service of Christ as the business of his life. The episcopal touch does not confer these things; it can only bear witness to them. And it is manifest that what makes the minister's life sacred—Christ's love for him, his love to Christ, and his devotion to Christ's service—is the very same consecration of which every Christian life is susceptible.

The sacred man, the sacred woman, the sacred child, are just those who are making the holiest use of their powers and life. Ordained ministers—many thousands of them—are in this category. But they are in it not because they are a clerical caste, but because, like vast numbers of those to whom they minister, and who unofficially minister to them, they are partakers of the Spirit of Christ, and are used as instruments of His will.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RIGHT OF THE STATE TO CONDUCT NATIONAL EDUCATION

NONCONFORMISTS oppose State interference with Churches, and State Establishment of Churches, but they are favourable to a wide extension of legitimate State action. They are, on the one hand, individualist in matters of conscience, responsibility, initiative and enterprise; but on the other hand they have never hesitated to support collective action in regard to public health, locomotion, poor-relief, education, and protection against crime.

For a long time in England—far too long—education was treated as a purely private affair. A parent had to clothe the bodies of his children, and he was under the

same obligation to instruct the child's mind, or to procure instruction for it. Of course no one denies the obligation in either case. But there are some obligations of individual parents which are best discharged by the whole body of citizens uniting their skill and resources in civic action. Each man is morally bound to relieve distress, but it is found best to organise public charity under the poor laws. Each man is responsible for guarding the health of his children, but while he does this to a certain extent, he pays rates for public drainage and sanitary inspection. The individual child cannot be protected unless the general sanitary conditions of the district are regulated by public authority. The same may be said of the water-supply—of hospitals, of the despatch of letters, of protection against fire and crime, and of many other things.

As long as education was conceived to be merely the inculcation of religious tenets, with as much intellectual instruction as was necessary for their reception, it was natural that education should remain the duty of Churches,

The training of faith and spiritual character is undoubtedly the work of the Churches. But on the other hand the teaching of sectarian dogma is not the proper work of the State.

It soon came to be understood that the State had a direct interest in education, as it has in the supply of pure water, the prevention of disease, and the protection of person and property. Another thing came to be understood, and that was that the nation could not be kept waiting for the last laggard citizen to make up his mind. The matter was too urgent, and the interests of national development could not be sacrificed to parochial notions of national policy. Slowly the great New England idea dawned upon the old country that the State has a right to be served by the efficient manhood and womanhood of its members, and that only by education can this efficiency be secured. From that hour the organisation of national education was only a question of time and public spirit.

That which must be done, and which only the associated forces of the commonwealth

can do well, will sooner or later be done on national lines.

For many centuries the State Churches of Europe had claimed the right to control education, with the double result that the education given was of a narrow type, and that, such as it was, it never reached the great majority of the people at all. The human mind was considered to be the property and nursling of the Church.

"Mother Church" was a title with a meaning. It meant that the State must leave education in the hands of pope, prelate, and priest. And history records how abjectly, and how long, the Governments of Europe did so.

This rooted prejudice accounts for the hostility of English Parliaments to public education so long as they were elected by a small number of the inhabitants, and chiefly by those who were most under the pressure of the Established Church and other vested interests. Every proposal to make the provision of schools and the training of teachers a department of national or local government was met with relentless opposition. States-

men who brought forward any scheme with that object were regarded as trespassers upon the ecclesiastical domain.

It is a common misrepresentation made by advocates of sectarian ascendency in education to say the State would not act in the matter of public education, and that therefore "the Church" was compelled to come forward as the sole educator of English youth. It would be far more correct to say that the State repeatedly attempted to deal with the problem of education, but was thwarted by the opposition of the Church of England and of a like-minded House of Lords. If the history of England were properly taught in our present schools, every boy and girl would know that Brougham's Parliamentary Committee reported in 1816 that vast numbers of children were without means of education, and that the provision of education was a duty of the State. But they would know something more, viz., that in 1807 the Church of England procured the rejection of Mr. Whitbread's Bill. That Bill would have enabled the ratepayers to

set up a school in each parish, and to support it out of local funds. The Bill was carried in the House of Commons, but when it reached the House of Lords it was rejected, at the instance of the Archbishop of Canterbury, for the express reason that it was only a bill for education and not a bill for confirming the Church's control of the child mind. These are the Archbishop's words, spoken in the *House of Lords*, *August* 11, 1807 :—" The provisions of the Bill left little or no control to the minister in his parish. This would go *to subvert the first principle of education in this country*, which had hitherto been, and he trusted would continue to be, *under the control and auspices of the Establishment*, and their Lordships would feel how dangerous it might be to innovate in such matters."

It was three years after defeating this attempt of the State to erect a national system that the Church of England established a system of her own for the purpose of making education sectarian from top to bottom, and graced that system by con-

ferring upon it the—not short, but simple—title of "The National Society for the Education of the Children of the Poor in the Principles of the Church of England." That name is worth a volume of history. It explains everything, down to Lord Hugh Cecil and the "Cockerton Judgment." The debate in the House of Lords in 1807, and the disingenuous pedantry of the Cockerton conspiracy, proceed on the same assumptions, namely, that education must be served out in very limited doses to the people, and that the Church authorities are to be allowed to teach whatever they like at the expense of the public, while the public are to be fettered and humiliated at every point.

Sixty-three years were thrown away, between 1807 and 1870, before the nation was permitted to have a single school under public management and characterised by the principles of religious liberty and equality in its conduct. This is a record of which the State Church has no cause to be proud. But it is by no means a full account of her services to the retardation of education in this

country. Lord Melbourne, Queen Victoria's first Prime Minister, proposed to create a State Training College for Teachers on a basis of religious equality, but he was assailed so vehemently by the State clergy that he was induced to drop the scheme. That accounts for another half century of stagnation. During the time that has since elapsed not a single college for the training of teachers has been built or carried on by the State. Nearly all teachers who wish for the advantages of training in a residential college have to submit to sectarian tests, while the State and the students pay, within a trifle, the whole of the cost of these institutions. A few colleges like Borough Road, Edge Hill, are honourable exceptions in being free from denominational conditions of admission and training.

Nonconformists, then, stand for the national direction of education. It is the nation in whose political, commercial, and moral interests education is made compulsory. It is the nation which will this year have to pay fourteen millions sterling out of rates and

taxes for education. The inevitable, as it is the just, corollary from compulsory attendance at schools and compulsory taxation for schools, is that the schools should be worked by the State and be managed by representatives of the people.

To this principle all the great Free Church denominations have, by repeated declarations, expressed their adhesion. The Wesleyan Conference, as well as the Baptist and Congregational Unions, has called for "universal school boards" and for unsectarian education.

It is too late in the day to treat education as if it were a private affair. In 1870 and 1880 that position was exploded and pulverised. Since then the nation has taken hold of education both on the sides of finance and compulsion. But it has not gripped the thing with a full control. Not until 1870 could the people have *any* school under popular control, and they could have it then only on condition that sectarian and private volunteers did not propose to supply the accommodation. That law continues to this

day, and it is an insult to a free people. But even under conditions intended to limit it in every way "the education of the people by the people and for the people" in Board schools has made large strides. These schools are the only portion of our English system that exhibits indestructible vitality.

The following figures tell their own story :—

BOARD SCHOOLS.

	No. of Schools.	Accommodation.	Average Attendance.
1895	5,316	2,345,000	1,894,000
1900	5,758	2,833,000	2,201,000

CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOLS.

1895	11,834	2,707,000	1,854,000
1900	11,777	2,802,000	1,885,000

These figures amount to a revolution when compared with 1870, when there was not a single Board school nor a single unit of Board accommodation or average attendance. In spite of long periods of partizan administration, and of the shameful policy of the Act of 1897, and every subsequent device, the

Board schools have now nearly one-half of the entire average attendance of the country.

	Average attendance.
Board Schools	2,201,000
All other schools	2,486,000

The clerical policy pursued since Mr. Chamberlain and his friends joined the Tories, was never attempted under Lord Beaconsfield. The Nonconformists have been harder hit since the coalition of 1886 than ever before. It looks as if Mr. Edward Crossley's words—regretted at the time—spoken at the Congregational Union at Nottingham, have come true. He said that the Liberal Unionists would betray Nonconformists on the education question. Certainly the Parliamentary Liberal Unionists—I make no reflection on the faithful in the rank and file—have already done so. And, unless all appearances are deceptive, 1902 will witness a determined attempt to destroy that School Board system which has been the object of continuous and harassing attack ever

since Mr. Acland, a real educationist, was succeeded by Sir John Gorst, who has masked his hostility to popular control and the rights of conscience under effusive professions of desire for the advancement of education.

CHAPTER XV

THE DEFENCE OF UNSECTARIAN EDUCATION

NONCONFORMISTS stand for the great policy, more and more followed by democratic Governments in our Colonies, in the United States, and elsewhere, that it is not the business of the State to organise or endow the teaching of sectarian dogma in national education. Nonconformists, as earnest Christians, protest against the public endowment of irreconcilable creeds in day schools as demoralising to the nation. National education should be marked by unity and sincerity, but it is marked by neither quality when it instructs pupils in dogmas contrary one to another, and held by Churches that denounce and almost excommunicate each

other. The standard of national honour and veracity must be lowered by the concurrent endowment of High and Low Church views, and of Protestant and Roman Catholic denominationalisms.

It may be said, and is indeed sometimes urged, that it is unjust to teach religious ideas of any kind, seeing that some citizens object to all and every kind of religion. That is an important point, but it is not the same point. No one wishes Religion and Atheism to be simultaneously taught as parts of national education at the public expense. If they were, the analogy would hold good. But what is now done is that the State actually provides the salaries of teachers who teach diametrically opposite sectarianisms in what are called "Voluntary" schools. They are, of course, voluntary schools in no honest sense of the word, since scholars are *compelled* to attend them, taxpayers are compelled to pay five millions sterling a year to them, and their teachers are subject to ecclesiastical conditions of appointment. Schools which get the benefit of these three forms of com-

pulsion are no more voluntary than an army is a peace society.

The Roman Catholic and Anglican view of the question is that "parents have an absolute right to insist that their children shall be taught the religious opinions of their parents in State-paid schools." Nonconformists emphatically reject the proposition, which is only saying in another way that every denomination in the land has the right to demand public taxes and rates for the teaching of its dogmas to children compelled to attend its schools. If this preposterous claim is the right of the solitary parent, much more is it the right of Churches consisting of hundreds of thousands of such parents in association. But no parent, or number of parents, possesses any moral right of the kind. No citizen has any right to ask the State—the political organisation of the whole people—to make itself responsible for sectarian propaganda. The State exists for national work, but the dissemination of Roman or Anglican or Nonconformist differences is not the work of the nation at all. It would reduce the State

to impotence and absurdity at once if every parent could seize the public funds to pay for teaching which the great majority of the public do not believe in, and object to pay for.

The view of a few public writers is that all religious ideas must be left out of public day schools, or all sectarianisms must be admitted. This logic is not convincing. Nonconformists generally deny the force of it. Put into other words, it means that the State must be blankly secular, or multi-sectarian. Surely it is bound to be neither. The State is at liberty to open Parliament with prayer. The American Senate and House of Representatives are so opened. God is one of the fundamental ideas, like truth, conscience, justice, mercy, life, and death. No State is bound to forbid reference to God's will and authority. And if Parliaments are not opened, or Presidential proclamations issued without religious assumptions, allusions, and invocations, no one has a right to demand that the State, when it deals with millions of children every day in school, shall bind itself never to mention the name of God or to

remind children of His love and will. The idea is unthinkable. Ineradicable instincts of our nature, the contents of our literature, and the moral necessities of child life, make it impossible to carry on national schools on principles of unmitigated secularity. To contend, as I have heard it contended, that the State has not even the right to teach virtue and morality, much less faith in God, and that the Church and the parent have an exclusive right to do this, is to push to an irrational extreme the doctrine of the State's neutrality in matters of religion. Morality is not the concern of the Church alone, or of the home alone; it is the life-blood of social, commercial, and national life. The doctrines that theft is sin, that we should honour father and mother, that peace-makers are blessed, that God is love, that death is not the close but the re-birth of life, are elements of almost universal faith, and they enter into nearly all the literature that children love. They may be said to be breathed into the life of children from the national atmosphere. For the day school to

be silent about these things would make it almost unintelligible. The lesson books would have to be locked up in cupboards, for they are full of references to fundamental religious ideas. Hamlet's soliloquy must not be read, for it is grave with reflections on conscience, and touched with the dread of "judgment to come." The same poet must not be allowed to tell the school of those "blessed feet" that once walked the "holy fields," and were nailed "for our advantage" to the bitter Cross. Tennyson, in the "May Queen," must not say of the Saviour of the dying child—

> "And tho' my lamp was lighted late,
> There's One will let me in."

No argument I have ever met with has established an analogy between the teaching of fundamental ideas of virtue, faith, hope, love, and God, and the inculcation of the points that divide Churches. By what logic are we bound, because we read to the children the thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians on the supreme power of Love,

to go on and teach the children that the Wesleyan or the Congregational Church, the Anglican or the Roman Church is the real Body of Christ, and that there is no true Church outside some one particular denomination? Because I tell the children that God loves them to do what is kind, pure, and brave, am I bound to teach them that they should confess to a parish priest and tell him their sins one by one? I might as well tell a railway company that if they allow a Scripture scroll of John xiv. to be hung in a waiting-room, they are bound to exhibit in the same rooms a list of the differences that divide people into twenty sects. The company would reply that it was not necessary, that it would disturb harmony, and that their business was to help travellers generally, not to promulgate mutually destructive creeds. Government of the people by Parliament, and a Parliament elected by a majority of votes, has to make the best approximation to justice in its power. It is Utopian to expect mathematically equal and absolute justice to be meted out to every taxpayer. If the name of God,

and unsectarian readings from the Bible, are to be excluded from Board schools because a few citizens do not believe there is a God, then we must not have a word said in the schools on Temperance, because some—indeed many—taxpayers are engaged in the drink trade. By the same reasoning, no money of the State must be spent on war material, or enterprises of war, because quite a number of highly respectable citizens are members of the Peace Society. This will be admitted to be absurd, but it is not more absurd than to call for the elimination of every spiritual and Christian element from public education because here and there an atheist denies all religious doctrine. Nearly the whole nation seems to regard some appeals to conscience, and to the will of God, as part of a child's education, and there is no real departure from practical justice in unsectarian religious education. But on two conditions:—(1) that there is a valid conscience clause for scholars enforced by popular control, and (2) that teachers of all denominations, and even of none, are admitted to the

teaching profession, subject to the arrangements of Boards to use the Bible. Just as the publican is not politically wronged by having to contribute to schools which warn pupils against alcohol; and just as the lover of peace is, though grieved, yet not wronged by having to pay to a common fund out of which war charges are defrayed—so the dissentient from those simple religious views which unite almost the whole nation is not injured in an appreciable degree by being taxed for schools that give praise, prayer, and the precepts of Jesus Christ a place in their programmes and time tables.

We are sometimes told that Nonconformists were wrong in accepting the settlement of 1870. But Nonconformists are not responsible for that settlement. They did all they could to make it a proper settlement, and if they failed it was not their fault. But for them, however, it would have been far worse. It is convenient to forget, when the object is to lecture Nonconformists for supposed weakness in 1870, that Mr. Forster's Bill, as introduced, provided that School Boards

might pay towards the erection and maintenance of denominational schools ; and if the Act does not contain these provisions, their omission was due to Nonconformists in the House like Mr. Miall, Mr. Illingworth, Mr. Richard, and others.

There are two distinct parts of the settlement, which ought not to be confused together, and towards which the attitude of Nonconformists is not the same. One part of the "compromise" was that grants from Parliament should be paid, and even increased, towards sectarian schools. For this provision Nonconformists are not responsible. They opposed it as vicious in principle and certain to be mischievous in practice, and their attitude has been fully justified by the results. The grants to sectarian schools have gone on increasing until, after the increases of 1870, 1876, 1891, 1897, and 1900, the denominational schools are paid a larger amount per scholar from the taxes than the Board schools. Nor does that satisfy the clerical party. They are now clamouring for the abolition of School Boards, the placing

of all schools under co-opted committees of Councils, the abolition of the No-Catechism (known as the Cowper-Temple) clause, and payments from local rates and other local funds to Roman Catholic, Anglican, and every other kind of denominational schools, in addition to annual grants, fee grants, small population grants, aid grants, and block grants. These are the natural developments of the wrong policy of 1870, which Nonconformists opposed to the utmost, as every true Nonconformist opposes it still.

But the option given to School Boards to instruct their scholars in unsectarian Bible knowledge is a part of the compromise for which, as I have tried to show, there is something substantial to be said, and to this proposal Nonconformists did not then offer united or strong opposition, and do not offer it now; although there are able and honoured leaders in Nonconformity who still think the logical solution is to leave religious teaching entirely to the Churches. This part of the settlement was the fruit of the Nonconformist protest against the reactionary portions of

Mr. Forster's Bill. But for Nonconformists, Board schools would have been sectarian. No small credit is due to them for having saved the country from a municipal sectarian system. It is precisely a municipal sectarian system with which we are now threatened. In order to kill popular control, the clerical party wishes to work the financial part of their sectarian tyranny through county and other councils. This would have the appearance of popular control, while the appointment of teachers, the insistence on membership of a particular denomination, the giving of sectarian teaching, would remain in full force. The only changes would be that local rates would go to denominational schools, and that sectarian education would be made one of the duties of local government.

Nonconformists stand against this, and if their rates and funds are taken for seminaries of popish, ritualist, and sacramentarian error, they will not scruple to take up again those weapons, more forcible than argument, by which they smote Church Rates to their fall.

CHAPTER XVI

THE EMANCIPATION OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

NONCONFORMISTS stand for an emancipated teaching profession as a condition indispensable to the attainment of national education. We have 20,000 public day schools in England and Wales, and in 13,000 of that number, with few exceptions, no Nonconformist can be a teacher. Even in the few cases in which Nonconformists are admitted as pupil teachers, they are at once brought under influences unfavourable to their religious profession. They are obliged to hear the teaching of sacramentarian doctrine in the Catechism. Not seldom they are expected to march to the parish church

with their scholars to attend Saints' Day services, held in practical violation of the Conscience Clause. Their future promotion to the place of head teacher, and even a good assistantship, they find to be impossible without conformity to the State Church. If they wish to enter a training college, the great majority of these are Church of England or Roman Catholic. Only eight out of forty-five are unsectarian in character, so that their chance of admission at all depends as a rule upon the testimony of the local vicar. The machinery of proselytism could not be more cunningly constructed, or more diligently worked, than it is.

Thus excluded from 13,000 schools, they have no monopoly in the remaining 7,000. Probably two-thirds of the teachers in Board schools are from Church of England sources. Members of School Boards sometimes take care that Nonconformist applicants for appointment do not get too many places. The general result is that a very large part of the profession is to all intents and purposes closed to Nonconformists. And yet we

call ourselves *Free* Churches. Our Churches may be free, but we are not free. It is, in two-thirds of our day schools, a disqualification for a public and State-paid profession to belong to a Free Church. Our *free* churchmanship is made to look ridiculous when the fact of professing it bars the entrance of the most gifted of our young members to the schools for which their fathers are taxed. Every man who is proud of the title of Free Churchman—and every Free Churchwoman too—should see to it that it is not their fault if this iniquity survives another Parliamentary election.

The position of the Nonconformist teacher in the non-State Grammar and Higher schools is no better. A general boycott of Free Church candidates prevails. One highly qualified Nonconformist, a candidate for an under-mastership in secondary schools, told me that having placed his interests in the hands of a firm of school agents, he received a letter from them to the effect that they could do nothing for him, but that if he were a member of the Church of England a hundred

situations would be open to him. After long and anxious waiting he at last obtained a good position as head of a science school, but his only chance of securing this lay in the fact that it was under popular and not clerical control.

The clerical party are making frantic efforts to retain their control over the secondary teachers in the coming reorganisation of higher education. This was the reason why the Bills of 1896 and 1900 were shaped as they were. They both made the much-trumpeted "Local Authority" mainly a financial agency for the support of clerical schools. The Council were to have the liberty of finding money, without having the right to make the schools what they should be, namely, schools of national education with sectarian formularies left out, and their teachers appointed on grounds of educational and moral fitness alone.

The Republic of the United States follows a very different policy. It has opened 166 training schools for teachers, which are the property of the State, and has placed them

under the management of the representatives of the people. Any one who has looked in at a Massachusetts or Pennsylvania Normal School, and remembered that such schools are open all over the land without sectarian restrictions or tests, will cease to wonder that England lags so far behind in the equipment and results of popular education. A country that gives the largest opportunities of training only to teachers who conform to a specific pattern of churchmanship, and that often rejects the better teacher and accepts the worse, deserves to be left behind, and will be left behind. England practically says to the State clergy : " You train what teachers you please. If you like, you can refuse admission to the training colleges to all candidates who will not support your Church. The State will not interfere. Make your terms—put what pressure you like on the conscience. We shall consider it none of our business to demand the admission of students on grounds of highest merit. We shall confine ourselves to supplying the colleges with money from public taxation, and each candidate for

training must satisfy you as you please. If they do not meet your demands, they must look out for themselves."

This is the attitude of the British Government towards the training of teachers, and it is discreditable to a State which prides itself on its imperial position and which seeks increasing intimacy with the United States. The school system of a country will never rise above the level of its treatment and preparation of teachers. Scotland takes its teachers to the universities, and takes care that the teaching profession shall be as independent and as much looked up to as the ministerial profession. It only treats its teachers as it treats its scholars. Everywhere the people have schools under popular management, and everywhere the teachers are appointed because they are able instructors and good in character, and not to serve as a second line of curates to the State Church clergy.

In the United States nearly 500,000 teachers in public schools have charge of 15,000,000 scholars enrolled in the same schools, virtually like our Board schools.

When these teachers desire training they are not insulted by being required to be confirmed, or to submit to this and that rite of a particular Church. The States are anxious to train teachers, not to hand them over to ecclesiastical persecutors. And this spirit almost equally appears in the non-State schools for training teachers. There are some 160 of these, and all but very few are as undenominational as the State Normal schools. In addition, not a few colleges and universities have normal and educational departments in which teachers are prepared. As a result of this vast, generous, and just provision for teachers, some 90,000 persons are every year under instruction and training in special institutions, as against 5,000 teachers in the English and Welsh training colleges, both residential and day.

CHAPTER XVII

NON-LITURGICAL WORSHIP

Nonconformists do not unanimously disallow liturgical modes of worship, but they all reject a compulsory and uniform liturgy. The overwhelming majority believe that free prayer has advantages far transcending those of printed formularies. They do not deny the inimitable beauty of some portions of the Roman and Anglican services. There are occasions when Free Churchmen make use of parts of the Book of Common Prayer. Of course, every hymn-book is to some extent a book of printed prayers, and we do not say that a liturgy is wrong or scripturally forbidden. But we do say that free worship is more accordant with the genius of the

Christian Church considered as consisting of spiritual free men and free women equal in their spiritual standing in Christ.

We also say that rigid verbal forms fail fully to respond to the facts of life and the needs of the human heart. An inelastic order of prayer is as unnatural as it would be to have the same eight hymns on every Sunday of the year. Eight or ten hymns could be chosen as chaste and exquisite in language as any ancient breviary. But grace of words is only a minor part of what we mean by prayer. A choir would not always sing the same music because it was lovely. Loveliness can be varied. Nonconformists have the strongest objection to wait for the arrival of a letter from Lambeth Palace giving them permission to pray for a certain blessing in words selected by an able archbishop. On a recent occasion a congregation was kept waiting until a telegram had arrived giving the words of a new prayer for some royal person. Nonconformists stand for something different from that. They refuse to treat uniformity and literary

elegance in prayer as a fetish. In their view the public devotions of Churches should be couched in language chosen by those in charge of the service, as best fitted to convey the thought and emotion of the worshippers. The most rapid adjustments of language can hardly overtake the exigencies of life. In days of telegraphic and telephonic communication no congregation knows what the state of the nation or of the world will be on any Sunday morning. The preacher cannot anticipate who will be in sorrow, who will be lying in sickness, who will have died, or what calamity of rail, mine, sea, or battlefield will have bowed the hearts of men, by the time he stands up to conduct service. The Free Churches give him liberty of topic and utterance in order that the prayers of the congregation may in some degree correspond with actual experience. There are, of course, what may be called eternal factors in prayer, answering to constant elements of experience. For these every service must find a place. Prayers for forgiveness, strength, enlightenment, purity, and the

salvation of the world, and intercessions for loved ones, for country, for the Church of Christ, for the poor and suffering, must always be offered by the Christian congregation. The substance of these prayers is the same from generation to generation. But this does not bind the Churches never to vary modes of expression. Language, like feeling, admits of every degree of shade and every kind of colour, and the Free Churches hold that the shades as well as the substance of the meaning should be marked in public prayer. Death *is* death, no doubt, just as sin is sin and as sorrow is sorrow. But the facts, events, and experiences which are called by these familiar names are found to vary in different persons and families to such a startling extent that it may be like mockery to speak of them in the same phrases. Public prayer should be marked by adequacy and veracity of language—language adequate and veracious in respect of the actual life of men. I do not mean that prayers should be newspaper descriptions of personal troubles. Nothing could

be more vulgar or offensive than unrestrained references to the details of family life and position in prayer. Some blemishes of this sort have led persons rashly to attack the non-liturgical mode of prayer altogether. But such faults tend to disappear with the growth of education and refinement, and the pain of their occasional occurrence is as nothing to the advantage enjoyed by the Free Churches as a whole in the freedom of their services. For one instance of unsuitable free prayer, probably a hundred could be met with of prayers pointless through verbal rigidity and mechanically dull in delivery.

Nonconformists are non-liturgists for another reason—they do not wish the office of public prayer to be restricted to ministers. A liturgy lends itself to such restriction. The Anglican service implies the restriction. A liturgy will not work in a prayer-meeting, and Nonconformists stand for the prayer-meeting. It is for them an act of devotion and sacrifice offered by the general priesthood of believers. It brings

the whole Church to the altar—the only altar which can rightly exist in the Church of Christ. It abolishes all separating lines between chancel and nave, between clergy and laity, between "rulers and subjects," between "successors of the apostles," and communicants at their feet. Free prayer does not simply mean free choice of language by ministers. It also means the right of Christians, irrespective of Church office, to interpret the wants of the Church in public prayer to God. Those who would confine public prayer to a liturgy are really striking at the prayer-meeting. But Nonconformists cling to this as a source of untold blessing and as the assertion of the right of the whole church to be a ministering church before God.

We are often told that the language of the Anglican liturgy is ancient, venerable, and beautiful. We gladly admit it, and should not scruple to use some of the prayers and collects of that Church in private or public devotion when it seemed fitting to do so. But the beauty of a formulary is no argument

for the wearisome monotony of its use. The most beautiful words are sometimes lifeless. Tennyson is exquisite, but we cannot discharge the heart's emotion through his chiselled phrases at every service. Words must not only be elegant, they must be the soul's own choice, and be mystically fitted to the soul's needs.

Then, as to beauty of language, Nonconformists have a word to say. They have heard, at week-night services, and sometimes from persons of slight education, language which they would not exchange for sentences in Jeremy Taylor. Language of a different order is of course met with, but the act of prayer, and the sacred Presence into which it ushers men, seem sometimes to create a special language. There is a later "gift of tongues." Men and women of little or no culture are sometimes lifted to refinement and sublimity of expression. Just as their face shines, so does their speech, with a light that is not of this world. There seems to be a "court language" in prayer, and some whose conversational style is rude and blundering have

been known to speak to God in words the most dignified, delicate, and delightful that can be conceived. If the choicest of these prayers of Church members could be collected in a liturgy, they would surprise hostile critics.

Nonconformists stand for the liberty of intimacy. They maintain that believers are on terms of free speech with God. Prayer is not a memorial to a Government; it is the child speaking with the Father. Here prescribed forms are not necessary, or are rarely so. The heart must have free play. Prayer is often part of a conversation, in which the Divine replies are coming unheard into the soul of the suppliant. We cannot always shape our words until we hear what the Father is Himself saying to us. We do not care to be tied to the phrases of centuries gone by, when the blessed fellowship between the Church and the Father opens not only new fountains of life, but fresh springs of thought and speech for all who enter into it.

CHAPTER XVIII

NONCONFORMISTS STAND FOR PUBLIC REFORM

FINALLY, the Free Churches, beyond question, are foremost in demanding and promoting public reforms. This was admitted by Mr. Gladstone, who turned to the Nonconformists for sympathy and active support in almost every great proposal of his Premiership. In his campaigns against the pro-Turkish foreign policy of his great antagonist, Beaconsfield, it was chiefly to Free Churchmen that he looked to back up his splendid and successful endeavours to prevent our going to war with Turkey. It is morally certain that without the help which Nonconformists gave him we should

have seen a second Russian war in the seventies. Mr. G. W. E. Russell, who enjoyed Mr. Gladstone's intimacy, has recently borne ungrudging testimony to his gratitude to Nonconformists for their resolute application of Christian principles to foreign policy, and to political affairs generally.

When the cry of Bulgaria was followed, years afterwards, by that of perishing Armenia, it was not the fault of Nonconformists that an impotent "European Concert" twirled its thumbs, and issued reams of fatuous Notes, while the Christian population was being done to death. Nor was it the Free Churches who tried to smother the indignation of England with the cynical fallacy that our interests are all material interests, within a very slight fraction. It will never be forgotten that the men who cried "Peace" when the Sultan was exterminating their fellow-Christians, were the first to cry "War" when problems arose in China and South Africa that might, many think, have been settled without the horrors

that have ensued. On these later questions it is no secret that Nonconformists have been of different opinions, but no one can say of them that they desire the extermination of a nation as a punishment for political differences.

The temperance movement in this country is largely the work of Free Churchmen. They have borne the brunt of the battle. They have not patronised the movement in Diocesan show Societies and betrayed it at the ballot box. Local Option, the only sound and real solution of our licensing troubles, has had almost all its political backing from men of the Free Churches. Others have blessed the principle on platforms, and then too often returned Governments to power pledged to protect the drink traffic to the uttermost.

There would not be a School Board in England and Wales to-day but for the Nonconformists, and were they out of the way, School Boards would be abolished in short time. Education for education's sake, and for the people's sake, without reference to the ealousy or pretension of sects, is the pro-

gramme of Nonconformists, and their force, with that of the working classes when once aroused, will have to carry that principle into effect. The State Church is always on the other side, because it *is* the other side. There are individual School Board men on the Anglican side, as there are individual Nonconformists who are sectarian in education. But there is no mistaking the watchwords and aims of the two great camps.

It was from the Free Churches that the bulk of the support came for Catholic Emancipation, for Emancipation of the Slave, for Free Trade, and for Household Suffrage.

In the future, the replacement of warfare by arbitration may seem an impossible ideal. It may be a dream for the present, but it is one of the dreams by which God turns men's hearts to His righteousness, and to brotherly love. We shall dream on.

> "The Archangel Hope
> Looks through the cope,
> Waits through dark ages for the dawn ;
> Defeated day by day, but unto victory borne ! "

It is certain, however, that Nonconformists will have to do the greater part of the preparation for the era of Reason. They are not dependent on secular governments for artificial status, ascendancy, and support, and are free from the temptations to flatter and conciliate politicians on their worst side which State Churches always succumb to. Let me not be understood to say that there are no members of the Anglican Church who work, and will work, for arbitration. There are some distinguished friends of peace in that Church, and honour is their due. I am referring to the characteristic attitude of Churches, not to selected individuals, and it is as certain as anything can be that the Churches which are not "branches of the Civil Service" will do the greater part of the work needed to stay the shedding of blood. They exist only to promote righteousness on the earth. They have no political position to safeguard. They have no monopoly of any kind to cherish. They have no infallibility to parade. The only reason they have for existing at all is to get the will of God

done by men on earth, and thus to train men for the life everlasting. This being their exclusive business, they are bound to be forward and persistent in it, or die out.

Their prominence in furthering beneficent changes of thought and policy is neither their fault nor their virtue. They are not in a position to help themselves. They are Free Churchmen, and the charter of their freedom delivers them from other entanglements in order that they may be in the van of those whose work is to help men to become the sons of God, and to become brothers toward one another, in all affection, service, good will, and peace.

THE END

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